

PAGANY

A NATIVE QUARTERLY

Edited by



Richard Johns

VOLUME III - NUMBER I

JANUARY-MARCH 1932

THE LAIC MISTERY

An Essay in Indirect Criticism.

Jean Cocteau

Translated by *O E Rudge*

I have been driven from home by the dust, by souvenirs, photographs, letters, and fetishes of all sorts, and from now on I shall doubtless never live anywhere. On the mantle-piece of that nowhere I should like to set up these notes, and my study of Picasso.

I reserve the right to live and to make friendship (more difficult to make than love) in the presence of these portraits, to which I owe recognition, and respect.

*

Chirico's paternal family: a mad uncle and aunt.

One uncle pushed a chair in front of himself to keep from falling over a precipice. His Aunt Olympia used to unwind her magnificent hair, kneel in front of a sofa and rub her head against it until she went bald. Such anecdotes help to eliminate all picturesqueness from Chirico's work.

*

Chirico's brother, Savinio, was a musician and poet. A naive amateur would ask himself which of the two brothers inspired the other, and why

PAGANY

they influence each other. It happens that they authenticate themselves. Savinio proves that family spirit and memories of childhood orient Chirico. Two brothers brought up in Greece, Italian in origin, their Mother watching them from an Acropolis, sitting on an ornate chair holding a bouquet of roses.

*

The new English process for cleaning pictures requires the use of chloroform. They operate on a painting that has been put to sleep. Specialists in white blouses chloroformed Uccello's battle. On waking it had lost that bleary eyed expression without which the public will hardly stand masterworks. Since then I can't look at Chirico's pictures without telling myself that they are asleep.

*

Seen from above a man falling is a man diminishing, this diminishing stops abruptly, leaving him there like a doll. A man walking away is a man falling gently, instead of being crushed he dissolves like a cloud. All Chirico's perspectives are precipitous drops.

*

An automobile accident, a railway wreck are masterpieces in the unexpected. One would like to watch them in slow motion, to see speed and immobility twisting iron in their milliners' fingers.

*

A photographed house is different from a cinematographed house. Even when nothing moves, the cinema registers time passing. Nothing is more disconcerting than photography in the middle of a film.

*

Characters gripped by fear should be 'statuefied' by this syncope, for a second. Hung near other pictures, Chirico's seem thus changed into statues, the air of ancient calm, of accidents that have just taken place, displays the postures, the grimaces of speed overtaken by immobility without having had time to get ready.

*

The horror of a street accident comes from immobile swiftness, a cry *changed* to silence (not the silence after a cry). One recognizes the corpses at once by their attitudes that are grotesque but not funny. Distance in Chirico is of death. A picture by Chirico is the brutal passage from one state to another. The peculiar arrangement of the heteroclite objects does not make us laugh; it is this group of dusty puppets about whose nature, though our eyes deceive us, the human soul never errs.

*

PAGANY

One night returning from Villefranche I came slap on a fresh accident. My headlights lit up the debris, the corpses. I *wanted* to see luggage there in front of me and people who had fainted. But I *knew*. The remnant of animal in us recognizes death.

*

Isadora Duncan died yesterday. This tragedy shows more than one relation to the order of things that here concerns us. It demands too strict a complicity between a crapulous little racing car and a fringed shawl not to awaken our suspicions. This shawl detested the victim. I have often seen it catch in the doors of bars, and of lifts, and tangle itself in branches. I perceive quite clearly what the shawl wanted, i.e. to strangle Isadora and give her that Jocasta's death predicted by Duse. But the car's? The latest news is that an American collector has bought it.

P. S.—On top of this they say the shawl has also been bought. Perhaps the two criminal objects have found a means of being reunited.

*

In the coulisses of the Renaissance, orthopedy, anatomy were merely awaiting a signal from Chirico to "go on."

*

A pure man's life should contain no action which can be effortlessly legitimized in the courts, and the courts are never worth the pure man's while. A pure man ceases to be such the minute he accepts a favorable position, or profits by a party.

I can see no single detail in Chirico's work that could appear innocent in the judge's eyes; plead not guilty, or save his neck. No one was on the scene of the crime. The smallest possible dry biscuit would come and bear witness against him.

*

Poetry is exactitude, number.

But people think that inexactitude is poetic, romantic. The crowd adores an inexactitude that looks real. I wonder whether blackmailing newspapers report things incorrectly because they learn them at fourth hand, or whether they distort the truth because of their profound knowledge of the public taste. The public senses a reality behind the apparent unreality of a Chirico painting. It is not going to be fooled.

Picasso. Chirico, Futurists. Expressionists. The newer generation combines them, refines them—but can no more get away from them than from Ducasse or Rimbaud. I can take much more interest in a young painter groping and hunting for the latch to get out. There are too

PAGANY

many legitimate children of the bourgeois marriage between Picasso and Chirico. I want an "enfant terrible."

*

To judge "Le Rappel à l'Ordre" from an æsthetic point of view, is to confuse tools with "objects of art."

*

I am not interested in determining whether Chirico paints better or worse, if he repeats himself or invents. That would be taking the æsthetic point of view, and Chirico interests me from the ethical. He proves to me the existence of a soul's truth, never picturesque, though possessing all the elements that evoke picturesqueness.

*

A great artist is inhuman, vegetable, bestial. If he tries to speak his attempts upset us. Stravinsky in the 'Sacre' is a growing tree. The Stravinsky of 'Histoire du Soldat', the 'Serenade', 'Oedipus Rex' is the tree that tries to speak and that does speak. Chirico always speaks. He often speaks by means of ventriloquism. Sometimes he speaks alone. Then he relapses. Nothing is more touching than an animal trying to regain the secret of human speech which it has discovered and then lost.

*

Chirico takes off his orthopedical corset and no longer hides behind the Italian illusionist, (trompe l'oeil) method.

*

Daring sprouts in brave men's backs. You call a man brave when he prolongs an old audacity. Everyone thought themselves intelligent from 1920 to 1927 because we were watching the roccoco of obscurity.

*

Picasso sucked daggers. It leaves a bitter taste in his mouth. Miro sucks sticks of barley sugar, sucks them to a point. The point gets sharper and sharper but the barley sugar gets shorter.

*

What saves Miro—his line is alive. If he makes a cross it crucifies.

*

I consider that art reflects ethics and that one cannot renew oneself without living dangerously and laying oneself open to calumny. This is the only wall between Maritain and myself. At bottom he thinks art a dangerous game, a caricature of creation, a "dawsey" (dar'st ée).

*

That is true when he looks back over that long reign of æstheticism and cruelty during which heart seemed ridiculous, but this ice is beginning

PAGANY

to melt. Everything changes. The plastic code is giving way to a moral plastic not to be judged by the intelligence. The new criticism will require the use of the heart, that is to say it will be more difficult to manipulate and will finally disappear. One of Chirico's merits is that in a completely plastic period he relied more on moral than on visual problems, which latter lead fatally to preciosity.

*

God's æsthetic escapes judgment.

The utility of a crime, of an accident in his work. Man is in God's image. When I can't follow an artist whom I admire, I have to make an act of faith.

*

Why I have not sent 'Opera' to the critics: From politeness. One must not suspect me of grouch. They haven't enough time for puzzles.

*

It is not a question of looking without understanding, or of enjoying a decorative charm for nothing. You have to pay heavily, and to understand with a special sense, the sense of the fabulous.

*

People ask you to explain poetry. They do not know that poetry is an exclusive circle where one receives very few people, or perhaps does not receive at all.

*

Stravinsky once told me that we should be indulgent to the hearers, and that if anyone had shown him his newest works a year before they were made he would have shrugged his shoulders. I admit to my shame that, distracted by Picasso's magnificent stage set, I took Satie's religious masterpiece 'Mercure' for something slight. Maybe they ought to have married Picasso to another musician or let him work alone, and have married Satie to Chirico.

*

'Singular' artists, 'plural' artists. Rimbaud singular, Hugo plural. It's born. The simplest work of a singular artist won't touch the big public. Perhaps after his death a singular artist may look plural because of faults of taste which make part of his work visible. Baudelaire: bizarre women, perfumes, exoticism, corpses and alcoves. A plural artist is nearly always a politician. Satie's 'Mercure'. The type of singular work without any impure element that could allow it to reach the gross public.

*

PAGANY

Victor Hugo was a lunatic who thought he was Victor Hugo.

*

The unwearying charm of intermingling civilizations. A Buddha with Greek torso and curls. The faces of Antinous, roman faces that can keep their eyes wide open in death, egyptian fashion, as divers in the sea. Sleep, death, frontiers. Great beauty always hesitates between life and death, Sepulchral effigies, sleepers arouse our curiosity even when we are crushed by fatigue in museums. I have known times when Chirico's combination of Italian perspectives and the Greek miracle would still speak to me, when nothing else could.

*

Chirico's phantasms present themselves full face. They follow us everywhere like those portraits where the eyes are ingeniously painted full on. Note that in literature Stendhal, among others, treats his characters in this way. The most dissimilar readers recognize themselves in Julien Sorel, and at every line of 'Le Rouge et le Noir' they say to themselves "that's me." Dostoiewski paints a three quarters, from underneath, from above. We feel no disturbing eye upon us. (Were I russian I might perhaps write the opposite.)

*

"No one is poet if he have not wings, yet one must fear lest Pegasus go astray in the solitudes where he would be his own sole spectator." (Voyage de Sparte) Prudent Barres! There is however a way of doing it.

*

Why doesn't the hero, the giver of advice, straddle the horse? Alas it doesn't take a solitude long to stop being one. Transport is quickly organized, and hotels; but one doesn't begin there. Even if the route is a real one, if it is still virgin a Lindbergh must be found to devirginate it. Chirico! Picasso! The horse least worried about being a show.

In this manner one maintains a solitude even after people have invaded it. Picasso maintains it by being full. Chirico by being empty. These two obstacles keep out the public.

The Abbé Bremond mistakes a rather ingenious form of explanatory poetry for pure poetry. Naturally he considers the pure poets mystifiers. If he were speaking of painters he would take impressionism for pure painting. Picasso would be set down as a decorative painter, Chirico as a painter of anecdotes, the primitives as unbelievers.

"The daughter of Minos and of Pasiphæ" enlightens us about Phedre's

PAGANY

origins. It's an alexandrine like those we find so often in letters of ordinary people: "La fille d'Agenor et de Leocadie."

He cites as example of poetry that is musical and devoid of sense: *Orleans, Beaugency, Notre Dame de Clery, Vendome, Vendome.*

Here is the exact text, that the populace sang under the windows of Charles VII when he had lost his provinces.

*Mes amis, que reste-t-il
A ce dauphin si gentil?
Orleans, Beaugency,
Notre Dame de Clery,
Vendome!
Vendome!

*My friends what is left
To the dauphin, of lands bereft?
Orleans, Beaugency
Notre Dame de Clery
Vendome!
Vendome!

*

Before the wireless had made it into a revue act, the cyclist's scene in the 'Mariés' was an example of pure poetry. That shows how fragile this poetic purity is. A nothing distorts it. A gratuitous work rarely remains so, it usually loads itself up with a meaning. The greatest solitudes are soon strewn with greasy papers. Picasso, always readable, in the end is read, but the eyes read something that isn't written. In Chirico's empty squares and among his accessories, our dillettantes install Durer's Melancholia.

*

Picasso happens to paint a young girl. "Huh" they say to him, "a guitar, apples, a bust, a window." He discovers them all. He had made a still life without suspecting it.

*

For the first time since statecraft was vulgarized by Richelieu, the Pope is imposing a supernatural state politics. Every one is surprised, some say "What, the Pope firing on his own troops?" others say "He is quarreling with the map of the world." They all think: "What about the expenses of the cult." Richelieu was however a minister, his state politics was an unbeliever's politics. A Pope ought not to count on anything but supernatural help. The public is an unbeliever.

*

PAGANY

A work combining the qualities of freshness and 'mise au point' is in danger of being too round, and of rolling full tilt toward the black hole of the general public. Thus La Fontaine went to children, Gaboriau to the railway book stalls. It is hard to fish a writer out of the obscurity of such excessive illumination. Stendhal, Gobineau please the elite in just so far as their masterworks are defective. The ball is not round. It turns over several times and then stops on the facet of one of its defects, the sensitive can then gather round it, touch it, discuss it at their ease. The sensitive like the taste of imperfection. It's something they can deal with. A Stendhal club is immediately organized. But proof that the real beauties of Stendhal escape them is found in the fact that equivalent beauties leave them cold. Who suspects Gaboriau of being a fine writer? But for a stray volume left in a train I should never have discovered that illustrious man. (Raphael is the type of painter who escapes the highbrow by his very perfection. Mlle Bashkirtseff had a very low opinion of him).

*

Sometimes metier itself makes a work look terminated, buckled up, triple locked, and this prevents the susceptible from getting into it and playing a role. Matisse whose technique amounts to genius seems therefore to have none. That is why this great painter pleases so many people so much. The amateur thinks he can put a finish on the work and that it needs his collaboration. Picasso and Chirico freeze out the public. You might say they find Picasso's still life placarded "no admittance" and Chirico's streets marked "no thoroughfare." But this block is in no danger of disappearing down the shoot I have mentioned, these painters have been careful not to give their perfection the form of a ball.

*

Baudelaire's best poem is out of fashion in just so far as he was working with the avant garde and was approved by it. Rimbaud's best poem remains intact because he worked against the avant garde.

*

A permitted thing cannot be pure.

*

The illegal suits me.

*

When a pupil leaves the class, they call it re-creation.

*

* White skein of moonlight. The buttocks mock Chirico.

*Untranslatable pun, cliché: *L'écheveau blanc de la lune*, and *Les chevaux* ditto. for Chirico's painting of the white horse.

PAGANY

There are smiling pictures of Chirico's with sky, banners, pin-wheels, and floats of fishing lines. If you went round behind them you would see a revolver muzzle held against the canvas, and hear a dry voice: "Smile or I fire." That is why these smiling canvases look at us with such anxiety.

*

Many of Chirico's works are blind, but none of them are deaf. They say the deaf are sadder than the blind. Yet a deaf man is a figure of comedy, the blind of tragedy.

*

Inhuman Humanist.

*

A friend sleeps next us, flat as a gun, the hammer up, the trigger on our side. It needs only a dream's clumsy gesture.

*

As soon as you stop looking at one of Chirico's cities, Monsieur X— turns the corner of the street, crosses over, takes a key out of his pocket, and goes into a house.

*

One moonlight night I was walking along on the right side of the street, my steps sounded as if they were on the left side and a telephone bell was ringing inside a house.

*

Chirico is a poet, a teller of fables. I do not find that he worries me. It seems I have annoyed certain artists by an interview. Someone said that I was a sculptor. I am not. I try to make designs in space with white furry pipe cleaners. But if I wanted to sculp I would sculp. Ink sometimes disheartens me. Poetry expresses itself as it can. I decline to set limits for it. I am free. I am not a poet with aims. I am not hunting for jobs, or for rewards, or admiration. Admiration leaves me cold. My work demands love; I reap it.

As Antigone says: the rest is all the same to me. If I annoy, displease and worry people so much the worse. I hate round dances. I am a preventor of dancing in circles.

*

The objects in a Chirico canvas have not made an assignation. Chirico chloroforms Venus in order to operate.

*

I turned round suddenly. A handsome young man crossing an empty

PAGANY

square on a bicycle, free-wheel. He was entirely naked save for a bowler hat. It was Mercury.

*

It is impossible to keep intentions out of a work. If you don't put in voluntary intentions, you put in involuntary intentions. Involuntary intentions are confessions.

*

A profoundly absent minded man would be one who could say, "You know I was going along this morning and I met . . ." and then he would describe a machine not yet invented.

*

Because there are no free places before the master works in the Louvre, a lady sets up her easel in front of the custodian asleep on his bench. After two hours of intensive work she turns out an excellent copy of the Gioconda.

*

I went back to see Barbette at the Empire. The years oblige him to rely less on natural prestige and to make greater use of knowledge. In my essay "A lesson in stage craft" I do not insist enough on the fatal aspect of the 'turn'.

Whether it is because of the criminal pallors of the Grevin or the Dupuytren museums, of demimondaines strangled in their beds, of Isabella des Guerret's marvellous death in Fantomas, of the fall of the angels, of the danger enveloping gymnasts, Barbette has the air of crime. I used him as a model in order to write the part of Death, in 'Orphée'. Before Barbette came on, a small boy was imitating a celebrated café concert singer. I have never heard this singer but I found the imitation very like him; it amused me as much as if I had known the original. Poetry imitates a reality of which our world has only the intuition.

*

Giorgio de Chirico in a Mantegna canvas. He looks at something outside the frame, indifferent to the torture, among the horses' rumps, and the young men who lean against bits of broken statues scattered on the ground in order to bend their bows.

*

People are always talking about religious art. Art is religious. Picasso's rages against painting result in a real crucifixion. Terrible pictures made of nails, clothes, tatters, wood and blood. Chirico never gets into a rage. The calm of his work is that of the primitive's archers, standing by the torture looking at something outside the picture.

PAGANY

Elegance consists in not startling. The scotch peasants hunt and fish for wily prey, dress like the time of year, merge into the heather and mist, and end by taking on the exact tone of the landscape. An Odilon Redon frightens poetry, it takes flight. A Chirico makes himself poetry, assumes as a matter of trade the moral behaviour capable of bamboozling mystery, of approaching it, of catching it without effort. People think realists are the lunatics that fill museums. A museum is a morgue. The only chance of feeling anything there is to recognize a friend. A friend behind the corpse. A fine canvas is a testimony to dead activity. In these exhausting excursions through rooms that stink of death one only finds one's feet again before the singular works. People think masterpieces are simple! A Poussin, a Claudie Gelée, a Corot, reassure us. By what miracle have these jokers got into such serious rooms? Doubtless a sort of false resemblance to reality fools people as Radiguet fooled them because his genius looked like talent. Or else I insist on an hallucinating likeness, able to resurrect a dead race. Go look at the masks of Antinous in the musée Guimet. They are not in fashion. That saves them from 'wealth' and lets them live there in the shade, on pedestals of unreal red plush, creased, worn, silvered with white dust.

•

Picasso deceives the intelligence. I mean to say that he invented grapes that were good enough to fool the birds. Chirico uses *trompe l'oeil* like a criminal calming his victim: "don't be afraid, you see there is a bell, the window is a real one, and the door is open, you have only to call . . ."

The first thing that strikes one in the Louvre is patience, the works well done. Let us not forget the patience of lunatics, their respect for detail. One blushes for Monet's portrait of himself. Neither madness nor wisdom have anything to do with that pretentious daub. In the Luxembourg, after saluting Renoir and Manet, the only pictures one can look at without disgust—mediocrity for mediocrity—are those with a good grade finish; For example "Professor X— operating in the midst of his pupils." The work of painters who laughed at these well made paintings has become ridiculous. Chirico, careful painter. He borrows this exactitude in inexactitude from dreams, this use of the true to plead falsehood. He carefully transports the reality from his mind to his canvas as the primitives copied miracles. Not having his faith to transmit, he transmits his good faith.

•

Our time will one day be called the age of mystery. We paint

PAGANY

mystery as they used to paint the circus. Chirico is a painter of mystery. Picasso is a mysterious painter. Picasso's mystery comes from his being a great painter, and all greatness is mysterious. The mystery of elegance: Adolphe, La Princesse de Cleves, the Fables of La Fontaine, Le Bal du Comte d'Orgel, as mysterious as are the Idiot, Une Saison en Enfer, Maldoror.

■

Elegance makes a work much more invisible than obscurity. Picasso is elegance itself. That guarantees him invisibility. For the first time an artist put mind in front of the object instead of putting a mirror, even a distorting mirror. Picasso's work is disguised, masked, hence mysterious. He arouses our curiosity. But Chirico is a painter of mysteries. He substitutes miracles coming only from himself for the portraits of miracles wherewith the primitives astonish us. Incredulity, the first stage of which is platitude, soon obliges an artist to replace the mysticism of religious painters, who *copied the miracle*, by an inventive lyricism. We must not confuse a martyr who walks carrying his head, and a lay figure who walks only by will of the painter. Chirico is in fact a religious painter. A religious painter without faith. A painter of the laic mystery. He must have miracles. His realism keeps him from painting miracles which he couldn't believe in. He therefore has to produce them by setting objects and people in fortuitous circumstances.

■

True realism consists in showing us astonishing things that familiarity hides under a cover and prevents our seeing. Our name no longer has human form. We none of us hear it. A postman who wakes us by shouting it through a hotel corridor, a cashier who asks us for it, or the pupils who make fun of it in class, may tear off the wrapping and disclose the name abruptly, detached from ourselves, isolated and singular as an unknown object.

■

A Louis XVI armchair chained on the pavement in front of an antique shop strikes us. "What a funny looking dog." It is a Louis XVI armchair. One wouldn't have seen it in a drawing room. Chirico shows us the reality by uprooting it. He is a land-escape painter (*dépaysagiste*). The astonishing surroundings in which he places a house, an egg, a rubber glove, a plaster head, lift off the cover of custom, making them fall from heaven like an aeronaut among savages, as if with divine importance.

■

The aptness of the relations, even the fishiest, utterly differentiates

PAGANY

them from the decorative fishy. Everything beautiful is true, and with a reality which proclaims a supernatural world. We note the weight of this truth, without other confirmation than the feeling that it exists, a feeling of security, and moral comfort. This truth scarcely ever fails to find, sooner or later, a familiar response in our world, and thus ceases to be surprising. I am not speaking of symbols. Simple minds use them to dress up everything that puzzles them; it is their way of reassuring themselves, of putting themselves right with the resemblance. I repeat that the cyclist scene in the "Maries de la Tour Eiffel" has assumed a subtle meaning, that is, a gross meaning since they started giving radio concerts from the tower.

*

This celestial verity which never symbolizes, gives certain works a prophetic tone. For example: Apollinaire's wound which Chirico portrayed on the poet's forehead before it had happened. And one day at Dullin's I was draping the white cloth for the prologue of *Antigone* round a dress-makers dummy near a table covered with architects appliances, and I found myself suddenly face to face with a picture by Chirico.

*

When I was composing *Parade* in Rome in 1917, I was not looking at Rome, I could see only my collaborater. We lived in a hotel facing the Piazza del Popolo, its garden spread in a hemicycle behind it. One couldn't look at the chefs-d'œuvres. Whenever we decided to visit a church or a palace we came bump on a notice board. At night we used to leave the Hotel Minerva where the russian dancers lived, and cross a city of fountains, shadows, and moonlight. The scale of everything changed. It was visiting Rome from the wings. One saw how she is set. By day Rome confuses me. The forum shows me the disorder of a room after burglars have been through it. Nothing is left but empty bottles, glasses, drawers, gutted cupboards, and scattered laundry. They have carried off the main thing. I knew nothing of Chirico. He would have helped me decipher Rome, principally empty, by moonlight, if he had been able to distract me from the spectacle of Picasso.

*

I was coming out of the *Thief of Bagdad*, a film in bad taste, with machines (among others a charming flying carpet). A lady: "I don't like that, I liked the *Three Musketeers* better, that at least happened."

*

Limits in mystery. *Orphée*. I was playing the part of Heurtbise. A lady in the audience stood the horse, Death, Death's gloves and the

fact that Death comes out of the mirror. But the moment Orphée went into the mirror she rebelled out loud. "Ah, ça non." "That is too much."

•

France detests the supernatural. What saves my Orphée is that the french take it for a comic play. *Meine Nacht ist Licht*. Night has been shown for the first time in broad daylight in Orphée. In France a person coming out of a mirror can't be coming out of anything except a wardrobe with a looking glass door. At the Empire last night I saw a show which is a document on the progress of intelligence. "We are less naive nowadays." That amounts to saying that the Parisian public is so incredulous that it no longer believes even in conjurors. Now a city of grown up people is a dead city. It concerned Mr Maskelin, director of the Mystery Theatre of London. Mr Maskelin places a pane of glass on the backs of two chairs, on this he builds a little cupboard sixty centimetres high and one metre wide showing us the boards back and front. This cupboard is open at the top. He shuts a bell inside and orders it to ring. The bell rings. Then an invisible hand shakes the bell out of the aperture on top. This same invisible hand seizes a basque drum, and throws out a handkerchief after having knotted it three times. The Empire public laughed and hissed . . . "there is someone inside." But the turn doesn't hinge on the fact that there is no one inside, but on the fact that some one is between the boards where his presence is inexplicable because of their size and position. "There is some one there, there is some one there, take it off." This cruel and stupid public was incapable of bringing its mind to bear on the point that made the turn an enigma. Edgar Poe devotes an article to the problem of Maelzel's chess player, and to proving the presence of a man inside. That automaton worried the whole world. Nowadays it would be hissed at first go. People would say: "there's some one in it, there's some one in it," in spite of the candle passed through the body and box of the automaton by the manager. Where had I already heard that silly elegant, laughter—"take it off" from tough minded people who weren't going to be fooled? I wondered. And then suddenly remembered: it was in 1917 at the Vieux Colombier when Paul Guillame, one of the first to defend Chirico, presented some of his canvases. "Some one inside, some one inside!" These later howls explained to me the laughter in that room full of highbrows faced with a deserted city by Chirico.

*

Save for a certain air of solemnity, Chirico's canvases borrow nothing from dreams. I have appreciated the fact that a young painter (Christian

PAGANY

Berard) paints a sleeper instead of following the fashion and painting a dream.

A man who sleeps without dreaming, or who dreams too deeply to remember his dreams moves me profoundly. Dreams are the literature of sleep. Even the strangest are made up of things remembered. The best part of a dream evaporates by morning. There remains a feeling of volume, the ghost of a happening, the remembrance of a remembrance, the shadow of a vanished object. This uneasy feeling is of no more value than those drawings on folded paper done by several people at a hotel dinner table. On awakening we watch our dreams as a spectator listening to a play in a foreign language. For a dream to keep its strength and for it to live like a marine plant in the sea, we would need an apparatus to register it during sleep. Dreams confuse the human domain, they do not enlarge it. I congratulate Chirico on composing by processes of sleep instead of copying sleep.

■

In describing our dreams we fall into the error which in 1916 consisted in describing machines. Follow the example of machines and dreams. Compose a poem with the mechanism of a dream. A face that changes into another. A word that changes its meaning as it goes along. Steel and steal (*voler et voler*, pun on fly and steal).

*

With Max Jacob the pun is musical. With Marcel Duchamp a superior gagaism. I have been too much criticized for the puns in "Opera" for me not to try and explain myself briefly. "L'ami Zamore de Madame du Barry," is a fact. "La mise à mort de Madame du Barry," is an oracle. I wanted to rejuvenate the tradition of the greek and hebrew pun. I tighten the knot till the finger no longer feels it on the string. People will soon see that my puns were not the brains but the heart of my book.

●

In 1921 I had a mania for hunting a beak headed cane such as our grandfathers used. The beak is made in one piece with the stick instead of being stuck on artificially. However one can find nothing but sticks with beak handles joined on, or curved handles. One night I dreamt that I was visiting Harrow and that I found thirty such sticks in a shop with a crocodile in the window. An old man asked me fifty francs for them. Each of these canes ended in a bell which he cut off. I woke up. The next morning I told my dream to Radiguet and proposed starting for Harrow. He liked absurdities and believed me. We started off. We had not calculated on the exchange, and arrived in London dead

PAGANY

broke: At Victoria station I met Reginald Bridgeman whom I had not told I was coming. He took us to his house. I told him my dream and asked him where Harrow was. He said it was the next station after his, and that we would go there tomorrow. "It was my school, your shop doesn't exist, and anyhow you won't find anything open tomorrow, it's Sunday." We lunched in Harrow at the King's Head. After lunch we walked up the ruined high street that they were remaking. I noticed a shop open. There was a crocodile skin golf bag hanging in the window. I went in, and found my thirty canes in a stand. I paid the old man fifty francs. The bells were the loose iron ferrules which he refastened by giving each one a smack with a hammer.

*

Prophetic dreams are not very frequent. The strangeness of a dream is nearly always a work of art. Impurity of dream acts. Mix two colors to get a third. Dreams mix recollections and obtain an actuality that has no relation to any of the recollections that they combine.

*

In dreams we do not dream stairway or room, we dream a particular room, or a stairway. Their smallest details. Realism of dreams. Poetic reality. Last night in the little room where Madame Pommeau allowed me to go to finish shaving, because I was walking along the street covered with soap, (it was, she said, a room she let to students) there was one of those gendarme's legs which they suspend on each side of hobby horses, hanging like a pot hook in the middle of the fire place. I was asking myself why it was there, and did not realize until I woke up that it must have been left over from some students' farce, the souvenir of a rag or a dance.

*

Certain greek statues wear smoked glasses so that the sun cannot finish blinding them.

*

Jocaste has just hanged herself. Everyone has gone into the houses, and Thebes is closing its shutters in sign of grief. Oedipus remains alone. As he is blind no one sees him (sic). He is an object, an object of horror, an egg, an apple, a T square in the fore ground of the city.

*

A generous american talks of offering jointed limbs to the greek statues in the Louvre.

*

When one is inventing, it is pleasant to learn that the work of

PAGANY

artists whom one had not known, has been guided by the same anxieties. Small souls take these coincidences for theft, and complain. The better minds find in them the proof of necessity. When I was thinking of rejuvenating greece, of operating on that old actress, of lifting her face (work on Antigone) I did not know that Chirico was going to set down those great egg-headed figures, caught in packets of gossamer, their open breasts displaying the monumental heart. We saw him afterwards at Rosenberg's. I should have liked to hang these trophies, the scaffolding of an heroic heart, on Antigone's neck, for lack of better. The grateful city spews medals on Crëon.

•

Anatomical drawings. a cross section of Antigone. A hard head, oval like a pebble sucked smooth by the sea. All the organs lead to the virgin's complicated heart, and her living scarf premeditates the crime, the crime of knotting itself around her neck.

•

A rubber glove hung near a plaster head, a deserted street, an egg set in singular solitude, the lighting of eclipse and plague, will naturally lead our painter to the theatre of Aeschylus or Sophocles, and evoke these tragedians side by side, their bosoms open on the interlocked constructions of incest. Chirico, born in Greece has no longer any need of painting Pegasus. A horse in front of the sea by its color, its eyes, its mouth, takes on mythological importance. I am thinking of the Ben Hur film which attracted us so much on account of four white horses. Filmed at full gallop, from a car going at the same rate, they line up a block of disheveled profiles cut into a marble wind.

•

Is there anything more realist than painting the imagined thing in the room where one is imagining it? A steamer hemmed with foam, a locomotive coming in at the doorway, a bouquet of trees on the floor. When Chirico places a greek temple and a fragment of landscape on his table, one can't tell whether the temple is small or the table enormous. The temple is not a toy, one of those animated drawings, mixtures of caricature and cinematograph, but really a petrified phantasm carried to the extreme, brought into the world alive, without any possibility of comparison being made between the scale of the cohabiting temple and table. The astonishing thing is that the painter's technique does not underline any difference between the room and the thing imagined there. The truth of what he expresses bursts on one and wholly prevents one from taking

PAGANY

the temple for a model or the table for a piece of furniture of exaggerated size.

*

If one shuts ones eyes in a room, and evokes a memory situated in that same room, one nearly always pictures the remembered room somewhere else, outside the room where one is remembering. One would like Chirico to paint the two rooms one inside the other.

*

We have no inclination to laugh at this furniture out of doors, what strikes us is not the absurdity, but the force of a truth existing in Chirico. The same remark applies to this lady laying a place for the young man seated in a piece of dining room in the middle of a mountain landscape. One does not for an instant suppose that they are inhabiting a ruin after an earthquake, or that they are moving and that a wagon full of furniture is arriving by that winding road. No. The surprise of this setting and of this intimate scene in such a place imposes itself with an obviousness that can only come from perfect probity of inspiration. Elsewhere on a segment of floor with a perspective like an inverted ceiling which has always haunted the painter, we have hotel furniture in a deserted landscape. It might remind one of Goethe's furniture abandoned pêle mêle on a street corner by a bad tempered carter. These pieces of furniture are as terrible to imagine there as a white woman among savages.

*

Walls, floor, armchair, wardrobe, stand there like a nude, in a ferocious landscape. Nothing evokes film company scenery. A freak of nature shows the tourist not a ruin but its contrary. The tourist is young, strong. He walks. The past bores him. The future exalts him. He stops, and clasps a piece of furniture in his arms like Charles Maurras embracing a column in Athens.

*

The furnished landscape must have its origin in some American comic film. Perhaps one where creditors carry off a portable house from over the heads of a family having lunch.

*

We live in a world where everything ought to be able to explain itself, where the court examines, where inefficient police observe, from outside, intestine enigmas. In Giorgio de Chirico, the accessories, walls, arcades, shadows, equestrian statues, vegetables, are suspect. I can imagine the police raiding one of his canvases as they would a poet's room. Better

PAGANY

keep quiet and let them cut your throat. The least object in my room testifies against me.

*

Without puns and puzzles there is no serious art. That is to say there is nothing but serious art. Through the naïvete of Freud one divines the greatness of Leonardo flying in a dream with Ucello. Every time Freud deplores his childishness, Leonardo da Vinci soars.

*

Every masterpiece is made of hidden confessions, of calculations, of distinguished puns, and strange puzzles. The official world would fall over backward if it discovered what Leonardo and Watteau are up to, to name only two well known concealers. It is by what Freud terms infantilities, that an artist portrays himself without opening his mouth, dominates his art and endures. For this invisible obverse side of beauty amazes people who only see its front side. Profound jokes influence ministers, academicians and critics without their knowing it.

One cloudy sunday when I was dragging myself across the lawns at Chantilly, I noticed a small automobile in the distance, a little car in a cassock, high and open, a kind of widow's toque, a mechanical confessional ambulating along the road toward the park railings, passing them, going up toward the esplanade, turning on the esplanade and stopping politely like an animated drawing in front of the Pavillon des Conservateurs. "Eh!" I said, "a lady going to consult Bourget." Worn out by the heaviness of the air, the walk, the boredom of this visit and the sunday, I lifted my eyes to the horses prancing over one of the gates of the stable in the Place du Connétable and to those on the cornice overlooking the race course. The contrast between my fatigue and the fabulous elegance of those animals, with corded chests and legs like unicorns, was so strong, that, lifted out of myself, opened up, stimulated, aerated, winged, uncorked, I discovered that the sculptor had made the horses with faces like the carp, to which, at a slightly lower level, soldiers were throwing bread. I needed nothing more to take me back to the problem of analogies and puns. "If only the stable keeps its secret." I thought, "so that the eminent psychologist and 'These Gentlemen' don't notice anything." They like order, they would be capable of putting the horses into the moat. On the way back to the hotel I understood that impressionist painting is boring for lack of secrets and that the painting of today is disappointing because it carries its secrets on its sleeves.

*

Is there anything more terrible than to watch people who do not

suspect we are watching them, who think they are alone,—especially if we know them very well. As if, masked ourselves, we had come on unmasked friends at a ball, they look at us with unknown expressions and speak a strange language.

Chirico is the decorator for such 'coups de theatre'. I compare two memories.

In 1914 I was leaving the room of a friend at the Ritz. As I was just about to go down stairs, I recognized the Marquise de R—. She turned the end of the corridor and, thinking herself alone, went into her room near my friend's. I was quite intimate with this great english lady, a sort of feminine Brummel, known everywhere for her beauty, her elegance and her parties. I had heard that she was ill with gout, and as I should long ago have gone to enquire about her, instinctively, stupidly, I hid myself behind a pile of trunks, instead of coming forward and making my excuses. She walked straight up to me, moving with difficulty, limping on one leg and supporting herself by the wall. She was in pain. Her eyes looking inward. Decay was the sight which made them so sad and attentive. Her face let itself go and did not attempt that astonishing stiffening of the flesh that women can obtain at will. The nose obtruded its enormous beak. The mauve powder which she had made it the fashion to use on white hair, reddened her skin. Tall, thin, able to sleep bolt upright on a concert chair, like a colonel on horseback, she was no longer the aristocrat's head on the end of a pike, but a shot-riddled flag, something worn out, hunched up, a wounded thoroughbred going back to the paddock, the jockey walking with set lips. My heart beat like an assassin's, I held my breath, realizing that she was going to die, and that at any price she must not learn that I had caught her in flagrante delicto with death.

The other scene, a thursday afternoon, I was looking for Pierre Bertin's box in the corridors of the new building of the Comedie Française. These corridors look and smell like a hospital. I had come in from the street and knew nothing about the performance. At the end of this interminable corridor I suddenly saw coming towards me, as if carried by the flow of some slow river, a little joggled by the current, a kind of log which was no other than Mme X— the great tragedienne. Impossible to retreat. I stopped in surprise watching this thing in the costume of Phedre or Hermione, it did not walk but floated. Deaf, blind, caught in its dream, it was about to knock into me or to pass on its way without seeing me. She did see me, and turned her eyes on me with the look of a sea-sick female, such as one meets in a steamer's corridors by the cabins.

PAGANY

"Thank you, thank you" she said in a muffled voice, and then, thinking I was there for the performance, "Hurry up, they are going to ring." What tragedy did she emerge from? What loves, what incest? I was about to excuse myself and invent a lie when I saw that she was already far off. The current impelled her, buoyed her up, knocked her from right to left, carried her on towards fatality. These corridors where I have seen two such different figures, as when from a tree, gun in hand one sees a bull finch making his toilet, or in the teleobjective a wild animal in act of drinking, inevitably come into my thought every time I look at a perspective by Chirico.

Chirico, or the scene of the crime.

Chirico, train time.

Death is the only chessman that moves freely and in any direction you like on Chirico's board.

Good bye reader I am going to bed.

I am ravaged by poetry as certain doctors are from using X-rays.



To G . . .

BOUQUET FOR OCTOBER

Katherine Anne Porter

This is not our season, the spring-born
Put on winter like a hair shirt, remember death and wait
For the turn of the year.

It is not timely to say once for all
What love is. (Once for all words are engraved
On monuments celebrating potbellied kings, high bosomed ladies,
Philosophers, clowns, slender pages with crossed ankles,
Knights clasping with smooth knuckles
Blunted answerable arguments of heroics;
Above all, on the tombs of Statesmen.)

PAGANY

Streets of burnished iron, tender grass
Neatly shaven to the grey lips of water,
Hotels, cinemas, the loud cold shudders of ships,
The spouting of whales, the pocked jaws of friars, the orchestra of
 machinery,
All all such memories are rayed metal, each shears off in turn
One minute from another, I must lose them all
Unless we make a sheaf of them together.

Landscapes such as the Flemish painted are justly
Asleep among windmills, thick with the smell
Of warm milk-soaked hides, ruminant breathings, clean orderly hoofs,
Minute proprieties of doorways curtained with wood smoke,
Shaded away from clotted sky, winter thick water,
Numbed with certainties, snoring in a snowdrift.

If the frost stiffens our hair, we have still the taste
Of sun in our teeth.
The sea has hauled us by the shoulders over and under.
We have stretched our muscles and yawned in the smell of cedar.

Catalogues of defeat, advantages stratagems, successes, anticipations,
Dried glories under glass, honors, a point of view petrified on its feet,
I would leave in my will to those for whom such things are substance.
We will walk in the Tiergarten: invisible
To the little eyes buttoned up against the frail sunlight:
Observe the dubious riches of decay, pity
The bereaved branches, the exhausted leaves dropping
Like tears which nobody notices.

This is not our season, the spring-born
Wear winter like a thorn wreath, sniff the wind
For the earliest rumor of sap, the singing
Thaw of rivers, feel under their ribs
The snap of locks when the earth turns
The key to her wine vaults and the wines flow upwards.

Here on a marble bench we are at peace to mingle the ashes
Of our cigarettes, and to exchange our tokens:
A peach stone for a pigeon feather, a grasshopper wing for a sea shell.

WARM RIVER

Erskine Caldwell

The driver stopped at the suspended footbridge and pointed out to me the house across the river. I paid him the quarter fare for the ride from the station two miles away and stepped from the car. After he had gone I was alone with the chill night and the star-pointed lights twinkling in the valley and the broad green river flowing warm below me. All around me the mountains rose like black clouds in the night, and only by looking straight heavenward could I see anything of the dim afterglow of sunset.

The footbridge swayed with the rhythm of my stride and the momentum of its swing soon overcame my pace. Only by walking faster and faster could I cling to the pendulum as it swung in its wide arc over the river. When at last I could see the other side, where the mountain came down abruptly and slid under the warm water, I gripped my handbag tighter and ran with all my might.

Even then, even after my feet had crunched upon the gravel path, I was afraid. I knew that by day I might walk the bridge without fear; but at night, in a strange country, with mountains towering all around me and a broad green river flowing warm beneath me, I could not keep my hands from trembling and my heart from pounding against my chest.

I found the house easily, and laughed at myself for running from the river. The house was the first one to come upon after leaving the footbridge, and even if I had missed it, Gretchen would have called me. She was there on the steps of the porch waiting for me. When I heard her voice calling my name, I was ashamed of myself for being frightened by the mountains and by the river flowing below.

She ran down the gravel path to meet me.

"Did the footbridge scare you, Richard?" she asked, holding my arm with both of her hands and guiding me up the path to the house.

"I think it did, Gretchen," I said, "but I hope I outran it."

"Everyone tries to do that at first, but after going over it once it's like walking a tight-rope. I used to walk tight-ropes when I was small; didn't you, Richard? We had one stretched across the floor of our barn to practice on."

"I did, too, but it's been so long ago I've forgotten how to do it now."

We reached the steps and went up to the porch. Gretchen took me

PAGANY

to the door. Someone inside the house was bringing a lamp into the hall, and with the coming of the light I saw Gretchen's two sisters standing in the doorway.

"This is my little sister, Anne," Gretchen said. "And this is Mary."

We went on into the hall. Gretchen's father was standing by a table holding the lamp a little to one side so he could see my face. I had not met him before.

"This is my father," Gretchen said. "He was afraid you wouldn't be able to find our house in the dark."

I shook hands with him, and told him how easily I had found the place.

"I wanted to light a lantern and come down to the bridge and meet you, but Gretchen said you would get here without any trouble. Did you get lost?"

"The hack driver pointed out the house to me from the other side of the river, and I never once took my eyes from the light. If I had lost sight of the light I'd probably be stumbling around somewhere in the dark getting ready to fall into the river."

He laughed at me for being afraid of the river.

"You wouldn't have minded it. The river is warm. Even in winter, when there is ice and snow everywhere else, the river is as warm as a comfortable room. All of us here love the water down there."

"No, you wouldn't have fallen in, Richard," Gretchen said, laying her hand on mine. "I saw you the moment you got out of the hack, and if you had gone a step in the wrong direction I was ready to run after you."

I wanted to thank her for saying that, but already she was going up the stairs to the floor above, and calling me. I went behind her, lifting my handbag in front of me. There was a lamp sitting on a table at the end of the upper hall, and she picked it up and went ahead into one of the rooms.

"There is fresh water in the pitcher, Richard. If there is anything else you want, please tell me. I tried not to overlook anything."

"Don't worry, Gretchen," I told her. "I couldn't ask for anything more. It's enough just to be here with you, anyway. I want nothing else."

She looked at me quickly, and then lowered her eyes to the floor. We stood silently for several minutes, while neither of us could think of anything to say. I wanted to tell her how glad I was to be with her,

even if it was only for one night, but I knew I could say that to her later. She knew why I had come.

"I'll leave the lamp for you, Richard, and I'll wait for you downstairs on the porch. Come as soon as you are ready."

She had left before I could offer to carry the light to the stairs for her to see the way down.

I went back and bathed my face and hands, scrubbing the train-dust with brush and soap. There was a row of embroidered towels on the rack, and I took one of them and dried my face and hands. After that I combed my hair, and found a fresh handkerchief in the handbag. Then I opened the door and went downstairs to find Gretchen.

Her father was on the porch with her. When I walked through the door, he got up and gave me a chair between them. Gretchen pulled her chair closer to mine, touching my arm with her fingers.

"Is this the first time you've been up here in the mountains Richard?" her father asked me, turning his chair towards me.

"I've never been within a hundred miles of here before. It's a different country up here, but I suppose you would think the same about the coast, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, but Father used to live in Norfolk," Gretchen said. "Didn't you, Father?"

"I lived there for nearly three years."

"Father is a master mechanic," she whispered to me. "He works in the railroad shops."

"Yes," he said, "I've lived in many places, but here is where I want to stay."

My first thought was to ask him why he preferred the mountains to other sections, but suddenly I was aware that both he and Gretchen were strangely silent. Between them, I sat wondering about it.

After a while he spoke again, not to me and not to Gretchen, but as if he were speaking to someone else on the porch, someone whom I had failed to see. The warmth of the river covered us like a blanket in the chill night.

Gretchen moved her chair a few inches closer to mine, her motions gentle and without sound.

"After Gretchen and the other two girls lost their mother," he said, almost inaudibly, bending forward and gazing out across the broad green river, "I came back here to live. I couldn't stay in Norfolk, and I couldn't live in Baltimore. This was the only place on earth I could find peace. Gretchen remembers her mother, but neither of you can

PAGANY

understand how it is with me. Her mother and I were born in these mountains, and we lived here together almost twenty years. Then after she left us, I moved away, believing that I could forget. But I was wrong. A man can't forget the mother of his children, even though he knows he will never see her again."

Gretchen leaned closer to me, and I could not keep my eyes from her darkly framed profile beside me. The river below us made no sound, but the warmth of its vapor would not let me forget that it was still there.

Her father had bent forward in his chair until his arms were resting on his knees, and he seemed to be trying to see someone on the other side of the river, high on the mountain above it. His eyes strained, and the shaft of light that came through the open doorway fell upon them and glistened there. Tears fell from his face like fragments of stars, burning into his hands until they were out of sight.

Presently, still in silence, he got up and moved through the open door. His huge shadow fell upon Gretchen and me as he stood there momentarily before going inside. I turned and looked at him, but even though he was passing from sight I could not keep my gaze upon him.

Gretchen leaned closer against me, touching my shoulder with her cheeks as if she was trying to wipe something from them. Her father's footsteps grew fainter, and at last we could not hear him again.

Somewhere below us, along the bank of the river, a train crashed down the valley, creaking and screaming through the night. Occasionally its lights flashed through the darkness, dancing on the broad green river, as its echo rumbled against the high walls of the mountains.

Gretchen clasped her hands tightly over my hand, trembling to her finger-tips.

"Richard, why did you come to see me?"

Her voice was mingled with the screaming echo of the train that now seemed far off.

I had expected to find her looking into my face, but when I turned towards her I saw that she was gazing down into the waters of the warm river. She knew why I had come, but she did not want me to tell her that.

I did not know why I had come, now. I had liked Gretchen, and I wanted her. But I could not tell her that I loved her, after hearing her father speak of love. I was sorry I had come, now after hearing him speak as he did. I knew she would gladly give herself to me, because she knew I was coming for that only, and because she loved me; but I had nothing to give her in return. She was beautiful, and I had desired

her. That was before. Now I knew I could never again think of her in the way I had come prepared.

"Why did you come, Richard?"

My eyes closed, and what I saw was the star-pointed lights twinkling in the valley and the breath of the warm river flowing below and the caress of her fingers as she touched my arm.

"Richard, please tell me why you came."

"I don't know why I came, Gretchen."

"If you only loved me as I love you, Richard, you would know why."

Her fingers trembled over my hand. I knew she loved me. There had been no doubt from the first.

"Perhaps I should not have come," I said. "I made a mistake, Gretchen. I should have stayed away."

"But you will be here only for tonight, Richard. You are leaving early in the morning. You aren't sorry that you came just for this short time, are you?"

"I'm not sorry that I am here, Gretchen, but I should not have come. I didn't know what I was doing."

"But you do love me just a little, don't you, Richard? You couldn't love me nearly as much as I love you, but can't you tell me that you love me a little bit? I'll feel much happier after you've gone."

"I don't know," I said.

With her hands in mine I held her tightly. Suddenly I felt something come over me, a thing that stabbed my body with its quickness. It was as if the words her father had said were becoming clear to me. I had not known before that there was such a love. I had believed that men never loved women in the same way that a woman loved a man, but now I knew there could be no difference.

We sat silently, holding each other's hands for a long time. It was long past midnight, but time did not matter.

Gretchen clung softly to me, looking up into my face and laying her cheek against my shoulder. She was as much mine as a woman ever belonged to a man, but I knew I could never take advantage of her love, and go away knowing that I had not loved her as she loved me. I had not believed that when I came. I had traveled all that distance to hold her in my arms for an hour, and then to forget her, perhaps forever.

When it was time for us to go into the house, I got up and put my arms around her. She trembled when I touched her, but she held me as tightly as I held her.

"Richard, kiss me before you go," she said.

PAGANY

She ran to the door, holding it open for me. She picked up the lamp from the table and went ahead up the stairs to the floor above.

At my door she waited until I could light her lamp, and then she handed me mine.

"Good-night, Gretchen," I said.

"Good-night, Richard," she said.

I turned the wick of her lamp down to keep it from smoking, and then she went towards her room.

"I'll call you in the morning in time for you to catch your train, Richard."

"Don't let me over-sleep, because it leaves at seven-thirty."

"I'll wake you in time, Richard."

The door closed after her, and I walked across the hall to my room. I shut the door and began slowly to undress. After I had blown out the light and got in bed, I lay tensely awake. I knew I would never be able to sleep that night, so I tried to make the time pass more quickly by smoking one cigarette lighted from another. The house was quiet, except for muffled movements in Gretchen's room.

I could not tell how long I had lain there, stiff and awake upon the bed, but suddenly I had jumped to the floor. I opened the door and ran across the hall. Gretchen's door was closed, and I turned the knob noiselessly. A slender shaft of light broke through the opening I had made. It was not necessary to open it wider, because I saw Gretchen only a few feet away.

She had not heard me, and she did not know that I was there. Her lamp was burning brightly.

I had not expected to find her awake, and I had not thought I would find her where she was. She knelt on the floor beside her bed, her head bowed over her arms and her body shaken with sobs.

I stood at the door, not wanting to close it and go back to my room, and afraid to stay there and look at her.

Gretchen's hair was lying over her shoulders, tied somewhere with a pale blue ribbon. Her nightgown was white, hemmed with a delicate lace, and around her neck the collar of lace was thrown open.

I knew how beautiful she was when I saw her then, even though I had always thought she was lovely.

She had not heard me open the door, and she still did not know I was there. She knelt beside the bed, her hands clenched before her, crying.

When I first opened her door, I did not know what I was about to do, but now that I had seen her in her room, kneeling in prayer beside

PAGANY

her bed, unaware that I was looking upon her and hearing her words and sobs, I was sure that I could never care for anyone else as I did for her. I had not known until then, but in the revelation of a few seconds I knew that I did love her. I had come to her home prepared to take all I could from her, giving her nothing of any worth in return. But as I stood in the door I realized that I was just beginning to know my own self.

I closed the door softly and went back to my own room. There I found a chair and placed it beside the window to wait for the coming of day. At the window I sat and looked down into the bottom of the valley where the warm river lay. As my eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness I felt as if I were coming closer and closer to it, so close that I might have reached out and touched the warm water with my hands.

When the sun rose, I got up and dressed. Later, I heard Gretchen leave her room and go downstairs. I knew she was hurrying to prepare breakfast for me before I left to get on the train. I waited a while, and in a few minutes I heard her coming back up the stairs. She knocked softly on my door, calling my name several times.

I jerked open the door and faced her. She was so surprised at seeing me there, when she had expected to find me still asleep, that she could not say anything.

"Gretchen," I said, grasping her hands, "don't hurry to get me off—I'm not going back this morning."

"But, Richard—last night you said——"

"I did say last night I was going back early this morning, Gretchen, but I didn't know what I was talking about. I'm not going back now until you will go with me. But first of all I want you to show me how to get down to the river. I want to go down there and put my hands in the water."



BROWN RIVER, SMILE

Jean Toomer

It is a new America,
To be spiritualized by each new American.

Lift, lift, thou waking forces!
Let us feel the energy of animals,

PAGANY

The energy of rumps and bull-bent heads
Crashing the barrier to man.
It must spiral on!
A million million men, or twelve men,
Must crash the barrier to the next higher form.

Beyond plants are animals,
Beyond animals is man,
Beyond man is the universe.

The Big Light,
Let the Big Light in!

O thou, Radiant Incorporeal,
The I of earth and of mankind, hurl
Down these seaboard, across this continent,
The thousand-rayed discus of thy mind,
And, above our walking limbs unfurl
Spirit-torsos of exquisite strength!

The Mississippi, sister of the Ganges,
Main artery of earth in the western world,
Is waiting to become
In the spirit of America, a sacred river.
Whoever lifts the Mississippi
Lifts himself and all America;
Whoever lifts himself
Makes that great brown river smile.
The blood of earth and the blood of man
Course swifter and rejoice when we spiritualize.

The old gods, led by an inverted Christ,
A shaved Moses, a blanched Lemur,
And a moulting thunderbird,
Withdrew into the distance and soon died,
Their dust and seed falling down
To fertilize the five regions of America.

We are waiting for a new God.

PAGANY

The old peoples—
The great European races sent wave after wave
That washed the forests, the earth's rich loam,
Grew towns with the seeds of giant cities,
Made roads, laid golden rails,
Sang once of its swift achievement,
And died congested in machinery.
They say that near the end
It was a world of crying men and hard women,
A city of goddam and Jehovah
Baptised in industry
Without benefit of saints,
Of dear defectives
Winnowing their likenesses from weathered rock
Sold by national organizations of undertakers.

Someone said:

Suffering is impossible
On cement sidewalks, in skyscrapers,
In motor-cars;
Steel cannot suffer—
We die unconsciously
Because possessed by a nonhuman symbol.

Another cried:

It is because of thee, O Life,
That the first prayer ends in the last curse.

Another sang:

Late minstrels of the restless earth,
No muteness can be granted thee,
Lift thy laughing energies
To that white point which is a star.

The great African races sent a single wave
And singing triplets to sorrow in red fields,
Sing a swan song, to break rocks
And immortalize a hiding water boy.

I'm leaving the shining ground, brothers,
I sing because I ache,
I go because I must,

PAGANY

Brothers, I am leaving the shining ground;
Don't ask me where,
I'll meet you there,
I'm leaving the shining ground.

The great red race was here.
In a land of flaming earth and torrent-rains,
Of red sea-plains and majestic mesas,
At sunset from a purple hill
The Gods came down;
They serpented into pueblo,
And a white-robed priest
Danced with them five days and nights;
But pueblo, priest, and Shalicos
Sank into the sacred earth
To fertilize the five regions of America.

Hi-ye, hi-yo, hi-yo,
Hi-ye, hi-yo, hi-yo,
A lone eagle feather,
An untamed Navaho,
The ghosts of buffaloes,
Hi-ye, hi-yo, hi-yo,
Hi-ye, hi-yo, hi-yo.

We are waiting for a new people.

O thou, Radiant Incorporeal,
The I of earth and of mankind, hurl
Down these seaboard, across this continent,
The thousand-rayed discus of thy mind,
And, above our walking limbs unfurl
Spirit-torsos of exquisite strength!

The east coast is masculine,
The west coast is feminine,
The middle region is the child—
Force of reconciling
And generator of symbols.

PAGANY

Thou, great fields, waving thy growths
 across the world,
Couldst thou find the seed which started thee?
Can you remember the first great hand to sow?
Have you memory of His intention?
Great plains, and thou, mountains,
And thou, stately trees, and thou,
America, sleeping and producing with the seasons,
No clever dealer can divide,
No machine can undermine thee.

The prairie's sweep is flat infinity,
The city's rise is perpendicular to farthest star,
I stand where the two directions intersect,
At Michigan Avenue and Walton Place,
Parallel to my countrymen,
Right-angled to the universe.

It is a new America,
To be spiritualized by each new American.



THE SMALL ROOM

Syd Salt

They received the guest with hurried glee. They were married only three months, and it was a distinctive house. Coming in you walked down into what seemed a basement, which proved to be the main room. The walking down was something—it required a sustained brusqueness to meet the suspense, and, anticipated by a decorous bridal couple who yet had to betray their own expectations, the guest certainly had to prove worthy of his reception. He did. When he walked in he immediately admired the odd fisherman's house, which, though remodeled, still retained all the uncouth charming features of a fisherman's architectural sense. There was a comfort there not apparent, and the couple did confide later to the guest that there was no closet space. And he had suggested many seeming nooks for a closet, but all the nooks, he was told, were important. Comfort was, after all, a problem. You could not sacrifice anything for

PAGANY

it or it would cease to be that. It should have been there. The ceilings were very low, with rafters. He was told the house was built on a rock.

"It should be so," he said, "and you should both be very happy," he added, looking around.

"And this is your room," they revealed to him, opening a small unsuspected door.

The guest looked in and stood silent. "It measures the man," he said. "It is a lovely little room. Do you use it for anything?"

"Only a guest room, too small for any daily use."

He stepped in and strode the length of it lustily. "I like it. The lines are perfect."

They went back to the sunporch overlooking the bay, now only a flat sudden quiver in the moonless night. The two men were alone.

"Well," the guest asked, "how are things?"

"You would know that," the younger man answered worshipfully. "Is there anything I could ever tell you? I am very happy. I give enough lessons a week to exist here. I have not been writing any music."

The young wife came in and handed the guest a piece of crumpled paper. "You dropped this, I believe. Forgive me for reading one sentence that caught my eye."

"If I know the sentence!"

"I come to annihilate, not to flatter," I believe it was."

The guest laughed loudly. They all laughed. "You're the same old fire-eater," the host said. He turned to his wife. "There is no man—well, like him!"

"Yes," the young woman agreed, "I do know a great deal about you."

He looked sceptical. Idolatry no longer amused him. Probably it was a bit of her husband's enthusiasm. Fearing a betrayal of his cynicism, he said: "I shall make myself comfortable then," and forthwith sat down on the floor and played with the dog. The quiet moment, intense with play and the dog's intermittent barks, had the kitchen stove clamoring for attention.

"Oh!" she cried, and ran. The swishing edge of her white skirt flapped.

"I love her dearly," the young man said with emotion. "These years you have known me—the problem of myself—all seems answered in her."

The table was beautifully set. There was wine, and the three faces were nodding flowers of conviviality. The courses came and went, the young wife came and went, and came back again, fresh and happy. The

young man talked incessantly of many things, mostly of himself and his lovely bride.

"You shall be our only guest," he said. "To be really happy we had decided to lock the doors and keep the demons out."

The guest looked suddenly at the young woman, but her eyes were drooped, intently, it seemed to him. Her sensitive face hovered before him for a moment even after he had withdrawn his gaze. Then, he felt she was looking at him. He looked up quickly. She was. There was a light of understanding in her eyes which somehow relieved him, he could not know why. She handed him the platter again. Graciously he thanked her. It was very lovely of her to do that, he thought.

"That, indeed, is a great privilege," the guest answered.

"It is not!" the host declared determinedly. "Mine is the privilege!"

This seemed to leave a questionable silence, to which the hostess again proved equal. "There are no privileges," she said ambiguously, to which both men agreed heartily.

"This is so different from New York," the young man spoke again. "Here, happiness is in the palm of my hand—there everything eludes one. There, you cannot prove worthy, somehow. The question gnaws at you and gnaws. There are so many faces. Here there is only self, nature, and the daily duties."

The guest looked at the speaker and studied his face. The woman is always ready to give that happiness, true. He had known him well, but now, where was he speaking from? The face was much harder, as if the erstwhile too relaxed muscles had been pulled in deliberately, and the eyes, wherein hitherto a great uncertain fire had danced almost crazily, were calm. They drank on.

"You have so often been my host," the young man said again, sentimental with wine, "I feel out of place."

The guest smiled. He took the tiny kitten and allowed its four little paws to dig into his face. "You have never been my guest," he said, and was immediately sorry he had said it. Why had he said it? He looked across the table. She sat very quiet. He had to explain the obvious for the young man's sake, for her sake. "You know the saying?" He paused. He would have to create one to suit the occasion.

"No, I don't," the host said, still reserving his hurt.

"And the guest shall be his host."

"Profound!"

He looked at her. She felt grateful. "Only the lone," she said, "may be together." Again she stepped in easily.

PAGANY

He rose, not looking at her. He went down on his knees before the dog. The dog was glad. He played with the dog for a long time it seemed to him. When he looked up he met her eyes. He did not know. The young man took the dog out to the kennel.

"How is it you know all this?" the guest asked with a smile.

"But I know nothing," she answered with unconcealed admiration.

When the husband returned it was as if it had not been said.

After a while she said good night and went upstairs. She left a silence behind her.

The young man, falling back inevitably into the old groove of their former friendship, said: "Let us drink to—to—"

The guest wondered why he felt insincere. "To—," he echoed, then, quickly, "—your wife!"

She was in the doorway, and had heard. It was a shock to him. "I must have the kitten," she said, taking it, and left.

They stared at each other and drank down. The younger man was not sober now. He seized the man's shoulders. "You have been my everything before this—now, I feel, for the first time, I can talk to you. You have known my struggle, only you. It was you who disciplined me, and I always had to understand beyond the moment of hurt. I knew you knew better always. If not for you, I would not be here. I have told her—I have told her everything—how often you had saved me for myself—how, on two occasions—you know!—you had to do it violently. Do not think I do not know!"

"Yes, you know."

"And when I was threatening to destroy myself, by not understanding, somehow you were there, and extricated me. And what I could never understand, is how you did it, almost without love!"

"You did it."

"Yes, but always I had felt I loved you, without understanding. But always you seemed to do it without love. I'm beginning to know—but now I'm happy, and I know nothing—and you are here again!"

"Yes, yes, I'm here." He always felt embarrassed in the presence of adulation. It invariably leads to so much explanation.

"And now—now—you are still that to me—I do not understand—you are always that—I had better go to sleep, don't you think?"

"Yes, you had better."

His flushed face showed nothing of the former restraint. "Yes, I'm drunk again—the last time was with you, four months ago, and now I'm drunk again—but it is different again—and—and—" He faltered and

PAGANY

looked intensely in the man's eyes, and staggered, "and now—good night!"

The guest strode the small room for an hour. Through the little window he saw the clouds were gone and that the stars were plentiful. A great quiet was upon him. He touched the ceiling and then the walls. And as he was about to put out the light and go to bed he wrote down these two lines:

All that is ordained before me
I know only in Thee.

The next morning, when he awoke, it seemed a holiday. The small room, in which he felt ensconced, was a camera through which he could see the whole world. Through the window he saw the bay, ships, the sky, grass, trees, and the moving figure of a man so far away that the only reason he knew it to be a man was by the apparent load he was carrying. He wondered at his own sense of delight and jumped out of bed. He felt strong and happy. He dressed hurriedly and walked into the main room. The house was quiet. It was November and the chill was sharp. He would make a fire in the fireplace. He did. A few minutes later he was battling with the smoke. The couple came clambering down with much shouting. "You've got to open the chute in the kitchen!" he heard. Doors and windows were flung open. When the smoke was gone it was much colder. The three stood shivering and laughing. But soon the fire was merry to look at.

"I'm glad you got me up—I've lots to do this morning," and he hurriedly went into another room pulling a shirt over his back.

"Can I help you with the breakfast?" the guest asked, seeing her walk into the kitchen.

"I will let you know when." He saw her eye empty itself with a light that became a shining thrust. A moment later she returned and went into the small room. He saw her make his bed. Then he saw her read the two lines as she cleared the ashtray.

"Do you always leave literature behind you?" she asked as she passed back into the kitchen.

He stood alone, surprised. Somehow he welcomed the remark. This was not adulation. He walked into the kitchen. "If it is behind it is literature—if it is literature it is behind."

She looked up, her face beaming. "I like to be naughty—it is a great line."

He did not expect or want this admission. Somehow he wanted her triumphant always, as she was a moment ago. Why did he always finish things so well? Why leave nothing to be said? He was more uncom-

fortable with praise. She saw his embarrassment and enjoyed it the more.

"You see—" she cried, "you see—one often gets vice in just being dumb, without even seeking information."

He saw her hand raised. It was a beautiful hand, yet a solid one. He saw her stand now. She stood well on her feet, straight, her feet on the ground. He heard her speak—it was the same way, the voice clear and direct. Everything seemed solid about her, yet she was ephemeral, just a light. He kept quiet now. This moment he suddenly became cautious, he would not spoil things any more, no, he would not be equal to them or more—mastering life was a sorrowful business. He retraced his steps, accepting her last remark with ready intelligence, and sat down on the sunporch.

"Now you can help," she said, coming at him. He rose quickly, wondering where the time went. The table was set, everything was ready. They all sat down.

"I must hurry—I'll be busy all morning, dear. You will feed Ranger. And this evening, too, I'll be late for supper—but I'll be back this afternoon."

The two sat alone. Now they knew how alone they were. It was difficult to speak, to shatter the illusion of silence, to articulate the inner voice.

"He's very busy," she said, her eyes always penetratingly open.

"Yes, he is. He is quiet."

"You call it *that*," she said. He looked up quickly. He did not know whether he had heard correctly. His heart suddenly pounded, his mouth opened as if to breathe in excess air, and his head turned away. She knew, did she? Then why—he could not speak. Questions, he knew, did not belong to knowledge. What belonged was—what? He stood up and walked the length of the porch and back. If she knew now, if she knew, then—! But what did he know, what did he know? She did know, evidently. It meant, it meant—he could not think. He faced her, her eyes were so open, so wide open, open for the world to walk in, everything, himself. He could not be critical of him, he could not talk, but if she knew, then—he could be himself. What could he be? All the time, he hardly realized, he was looking into her eyes. Then he broke the spell and walked back again and again. She kept her silence. Why did she not speak? Why didn't she say more? Why not make sure? Didn't she know he could not ask, say anything? That he was to presume that—that he was to presume—what? He stopped and looked out on the bay. It was a blue sheet now. Unbelievably, little boats sat on the sheet.

PAGANY

Familiar arguments of forgotten voices hummed in his ear. Only their ineluctible logic conveyed meaning, the words were only mileposts to stop and go on, but the familiar logic of eternal whisperings seethed in him, quickly came and went, conclusions anticipating questions, and questions more questions.

"Would you like to walk to town?" he heard her ask.

"Yes," he cried readily, and felt embarrassed.

They walked, first alone, then arm in arm. Once he looked into her eyes. They had stopped on the road. There seemed to be no reason. The reason was about them. The scene was beautiful. They stopped and looked around, away from each other. And, surely, they looked at each other. In her eyes was an opaque light, as if behind blind windows. He could not understand. A short distance on a woman stood in front of her house. Her cat was approaching them, tail up.

"She is blind in one eye!" the young woman exclaimed.

"I dunno," the woman who owned the cat, said, "her eye's turned 'round."

"That is great faith," he remarked.

She looked up suddenly into his eyes. "Your eyes are the color of your beret." The beret was a brilliant blue—his eyes were, as far as he knew, gray. Sometimes he suspected them of being near blue, when he felt very good. Now he believed her. He took her arm in answer and walked on.

When they reached town they stopped at one of the bakeshops for coffee. They were, to each other, sitting opposite, a fathomless well of deep knowledge, of refreshing waters. More and more he knew how unreachable the deeps were, and how far he had stepped into that void wherein nothing exists but knowledge, and that a constantly reducible fraction till almost nothing seemed to be left. Though he thought of him less and less, and this not for his sake but because he wanted to know more and more her real reason, still, he was fitfully conscious of him and his problem, which seemed never to have been mentioned, ever before or now. What this problem was he knew well. He also knew even good women liked problems in men. It gave them something to do and made steadfast and secure the moral bond of gratitude on the part of the man. But, of course, it was not *it*. Still, he reasoned on, they were both young, and if they grew up together the difference between them—of her intense and true knowledge of the absolute quality of real freedom and his self-hypnotized and determined transitory happiness, giving a quality to love dependent on growth, making of love a prison in which, though he out-

grew it would stay in it, or else shatter all only because of the realization of his own past illusions, and it all having really nothing to do with her—the difference might work out. He knew it rarely did. What followed was a surrender invariably which precluded any access to the greatest knowledge of love—the eternal *being*. And the good woman would linger in such relationship only because of security. No, not necessarily in the materialistic sense, but in the sense that love had become an evident thing in its habits and duties and conclusions, and that even with the greatest understanding where such did not exist, she would inevitably demand the very same thing over again. The nature of exchange was only temporary, the speculation great, and the end an open question of sameness. He realized the only thing he could not afford was illusion—he hadn't for some time. He did not wish the fictitious halo about him—he dreaded that most. That—idolatry, adulation—was a self-imposed prison which had to be destroyed or be constantly fed with more illusion.

"Do you think he has changed much?" she asked.

He was really frightened. Had she read his thoughts? "I think you have done a miracle," he answered.

"Do you *really*?" she asked again.

"Yes. He wished it."

"And what he does not wish?" she persisted.

"What?" he fenced, again feeling his heart pound uncontrollably.

"Shall I ask my fate of you?"

This sounded final to him. But he did not know. And he could not know how much of this was for the other's sake. Her interest was double-edged, and a woman always falls into that role. But the next remark destroyed him and left him little room for doubt.

"Whatever you say will happen!"

She gave him so fatalistic a power it left him weak. And then, the very thing he feared came over him again. What had she meant, and why had she said it that way? Where was she speaking from? Was the other still in it, or not? It made all the difference in the world. And why whatever *he* says, unless—?

Walking back, each time he looked at her in their great silence the world fell away from him. Quickly it was a singing world he was walking in. The birds that flew were not in air flying, he saw them move, jump out of air into themselves. It was a revelation he could not explain. Everything was like that. The stationary quality of everything, and he, nothing, left him altogether speechless. Only the deep reverence in his eyes reassured her. She was waiting. To make sure one had to wait.

PAGANY

When they approached the house she led him around the rear of it where the garden was and wild green near it. There they stood for a moment. He suddenly stood altogether still. Suddenly everything was still, and she before him. It was an appearance. She was an angel, come here, a spirit, come to tell him what cannot be said and what cannot be written, come for him, was there standing, still, for him. He was looking into her eyes and seeing all. She was standing before the bush, because the bush behind and the skies blazed a quiet blue and her hair was a brazen sun that burned his eyes. No, she was behind the bush because her face, written in sweet water, was a light among leaves. He did not know where she stood. He reached out his hand, across great spaces, and found hers.

"I love you," he said.

"Looking all over for you!" the young man fairly shouted as he advanced toward them.

To them, at that moment, he was something of another world that had strayed into their paradise of this world. He stood there, unrecognizable, a meaningless composition of fear, chagrin and hate. They all walked into the house.

The two went upstairs directly. The guest went into the small room. He heard subdued voices, his occasionally loud. He heard his voice break, plead, and he thought he heard it sob. Then everything was quiet for a long time. He went out and walked far and back. All the time he was not thinking. There was nothing left of him now. He knew.

When he came into the house she came down immediately. She was wan. In this small time struggle had written itself on her face. He saw she was a torn woman. This is not what he expected or wanted. Inside of him he felt a physical lifting, as if his organs were coming up to meet him and he down. He had to hold on to himself to avoid a certain oncoming pain.

"I do not understand the in-between moments," she said. Her words were chiseled in air and she breathed softly and deeply.

"There are no great moments, really," he answered, surprised he could talk. He paused for breath. "If they seem great it is only because they eliminate the in-between moments."

"That cannot be true!" she cried. His heart was joyful to see her anger. "It cannot be true!" she repeated, and he saw her eyes again as he had seen them before.

"What can it be?" he asked, mollified.

She looked at him so knowingly there was no distance between them.

PAGANY

He wanted to get down on his knees, but they only faltered and bent. He straightened himself, awaiting the blow. He had seen the lance in her eye and knew it was for him, to be hurled into his heart.

"*You* understand waiting!" she said with a distinct and measured voice. It was too clear for him. "You will have to wait!"

"Waiting is a precious thing," he answered weakly, "gods wait."

"You are a god—he is not!"

There was a thud in him, as inside the earth. "I will go then," he said.

"You cannot go—like this!"

"Why?"

"You leave things undone!"

He did not understand. "No more than the raw edges of life—they cannot be smoothened."

She looked at him penetratingly. She was trying to speak to him without words, but he did not understand.

"What would you have me do?" he asked.

"I won't ask you to stay—I don't want you to go."

He saw love in her eyes, and he saw pain, and he saw much he could not understand. It was like hunger. But hunger was *his*!

The young man came in and stood as an unwelcome guest. She went into the kitchen. The guest went into the small room. The young man followed him in. He stood there like a hurt dog, he could not speak.

"I do not understand, I do not understand," he muttered. "You! You! The man!" The guest kept silent. "I cannot believe it—we are just children—you are older—you know more—this was in the palm of my hand—secure—you were secure to me—I tell you she is my mouth, I cannot speak—I must pause sometime—you have pursued me—I always believed in you—now, where are you—where are you?"

The guest rose, impatient. "You will chip away at this idol until you will discover a man of flesh and blood!"

She was in the doorway and had heard what he had said. "You must go now and give that lesson," she said to him. He accepted her request as a blow. He walked out and she followed.

The guest went out on the sunporch. It was getting dark. He paced the porch to and fro, it seemed to him for hours. Suddenly it welled up in him. He must destroy the waiting! He must! Absolutism gripped him. He loved her! He loved her! Nothing mattered! He would ask her to go away with him now! There was no other solution. Her husband would feed on her and feed on her. He would sap her! She must

have freedom, true happiness! He loved her! There was nothing else! She dare not betray herself! Security in waiting would destroy her too! The storm must leave nothing, nothing for all! It was the only way, the prison must be destroyed for all! Did she really think he was a god or—was it still that same thing?—he had forgotten what—whatever it was it will come out, it must! He would make sure by being final. She stood facing him. He felt electrocuted, a burned out wire.

"You see!" she said. She was referring to her husband, evidently. No, he did not see, he saw nothing but her.

"We cannot pity him too much," he said, "we must not be too kind."

"That is not all!"

Not all! Then he was overlooking something, something important. What was it? He looked at her—she seemed quieter. A greater certainty was with her. He did not know what it was. He saw love in her eyes.

"Let us go into the small room," she said, "you like it there." They went in. It was dark. She sat down on the bed. He sat down on a chair. "Come over here," she asked. He moved through a void. It was all a dream, all! She took his hand. They sat this way for a long time. "Well," she said.

"I cannot wait," he said finally.

"I must wait—I *am* waiting," she said softly.

He looked at her in the dark. He held her hand. She was near him.

"I cannot wait," he repeated.

She looked up at him. He knew there was something to understand now, but he couldn't know what. All he knew was he loved her. He felt very weak. Beads of perspiration were on his forehead. She wiped them away. "You are very tired," she said, "you are very tired."

"Yes," he answered, his voice just a whisper. They sat in the dark for a long time.

"Your eyes are not blue just now. Perhaps you had better rest—go to sleep." She unlaced his shoes and took them off. Then she tucked him in and stood before him, holding his hand. Under his breath he had said, "My God!" She stood before him as that angel. He held her hand, but his was limp, weak. She stood translated, transmuted to flesh. All he knew of her, all she knew, was written on her face. And he was not here, hardly. Nothing of him was left. This seemed to be the wavering moment. He felt it waver. He did not know why it wavered. In that moment they saw each other. She stood in all she meant. He lay there, in all he meant. Both loved, yet both were silent. They were near each other, very near, yet very far away. They could not mean more to them-

PAGANY

selves. Each in their full integrity, yet so close, holding hands. This was the eternal challenge waiting for the first reconciliation, the first move to surrender, the surrender of the one or the other. Equality wavered between them, their hands trembled. She waited another moment, then walked out. Exhausted, he fell asleep.

When he awoke he hurried in. The two were sitting quiet. He saw the glint of victory in his friend's eye, then the sudden pretence of sympathy. He looked at her. She was quiet, and the light that had been in her eye for him only was not there. He seemed dazed. Something had happened, he did not know what. It was evidently late. The host apologized saying he would need sleep as he would have a busy day tomorrow and went upstairs. He looked at her in great wonder. He seemed to have walked in to another world, an unreal world. He could not say anything, all the tangents seemed gone, he stood alone. She went into the kitchen and he followed her blindly.

"I don't know why I asked you to stay," she said. He felt his body shoot forward a great distance, but he stood still. "Or maybe I'm wrong in saying that——"

Words came from him. He did not know what he was saying. "Inasmuch as you said it, it is the only criterion."

She looked quickly at him, hurt. He gave her no escape, no security. "I know nothing, you see—," she hesitated.

"Yes."

They went back into the other room. She walked into the small room, about to make his bed.

"I am going," he said.

Now her eyes were loud with anger. She seemed vindictive. It dazed him. "This, then, will be more literature——"

It curled up in him, everything. He could not believe the words. His hand shot out and seized hers. "I love you!" he cried hoarsely.

"But I am flesh and blood too!" she answered, her head turned away. Slowly she withdrew her hand. Slowly he heard her walk up the stairs. He stood transfixed with the suddenness of it all. He fell into a chair and sat there, he did not know how long. Then, almost mechanically, he took a pencil and wrote

You stood a thing apart
When all I felt of heart
Was with you.
But all that weaves
Bright things apart

PAGANY

Weaves them to one heart.

He left the paper behind.



EVENTUALITIES

Edwin Rolfe

1

when I shall laughing find the giddy
spring receiving me aware of lunacy
in the bestowal raptly hung upon a thread

When both of us quite dead
declare the cleaving done for both of us
quite dead

when laughter loses resonance
and grates upon the raucous wheel still
turning swiftly

then no more the blending
will demand our fealty

no more the sugar
in the cup be stirred against its chemistry
no more the listless villified

no more defied
the murdering of many moments built of sun
(though shades be drawn from dawn till darkening)

no more the thou cupped close . . .

2

then victory of something over us despaired
of ever kindling us

then maudlin strings muted
at the point of their crescendo

then seeking
cast into an old irrevocable attic where
we store the coverlet still blue from meeting

PAGANY

the skies of many dawns

still golden

remembering its own reception of many suns
through many clouds and skies we leaned upon

will suddenly partake the thou cupped close
the I attendant on the thou cupped close

where measured rhythms flaunt thy face again
sun-kindled

and where sweets again dissolve
leaving the last dregs tainted but the thou
again fulfilled again revealed

cupped close.



AN ADIRONDACK NARRATIVE

Julian L Shapiro

Back of him a branch snapped and when he turned he saw a girl coming out of a clump of bushes with her body twisted so she could get her dress off a thorn that caught it up. She didnt know he was there till he called to ask if he could help her but she told him no without looking his way.

The dress was heavy draping stuff and it was pulled so tight against her body he thought she didnt have anything on underneath it. He could see her legs halfway up her thighs. The backs of her knees were straight and without bulges. Her arms and neck were browned and her shape was good.

He said she was having a tough time of it. As he spoke he heard her say something angry and her arm came down quick and there was a sound of ripping goods. She turned and came out of the bushes and when she walked up to him he saw a hole in her skirt and a piece of cloth hanging down in a thin strip. He laughed and said she should have let him help her. She said it didnt make any difference and asked him what he was doing there. He said he was up from New York on a vacation. She asked him if he was staying at Bennetts up the road and he said yes it

PAGANY

was a nice place. Then she asked him what he did in New York and he said he worked in a furnishing store and she said what kind of furnishing. Mens. He sold shirts and socks and hats. Neckties too. The girl asked him how long hed been doing that and he said six or seven years. Then she wanted to know how old he was. 29. She asked him if it was fun selling things in a store and he said no it wasnt much fun and it was hard work in hot weather. He said this was the first time hed ever been in the Adirondacks and hed gotten sick the month before and the doctor told him he should go to the mountains for a couple of weeks. So he came here. She asked him how he came to be at Bennetts and he said he read in a vacationguide that Warrensburg was over a thousand feet up and that was just about right for him so he borrowed a Ford and drove up from the city. When he got to Warrensburg he asked the man in the drugstore Bertrand for a good farmhouse and Bertrand said Bennetts was as good a place as hed be like to find around those parts.

The girl asked him what he did all day and he said *I walk around up and down. Sometimes I go off across the fields and do like Im doing now. Sit on a stone. Its good to sit still for a while.* When she wanted to know if he ever went in the woods he said he didnt know his way around and hed read it was easy to get lost in the woods and he wasnt much of a mountaineer he guessed. She said the woods were pretty good fun and she knew a nice place to swim. Viele Pond was only five miles up the road and nobody was living at the lodge. Sometimes she went up there alone and took a swim. The water was pretty cold around that season but when you came out again in the sun it was good. He said it sounded all right and maybe they could go sometime. She said it was too far to go that afternoon but they still had plenty of time for a walk if he wanted to. Shed show him the woods.

He said hed go but first hed have to take the Ford back to Bennetts. They both got in and it was only a minute or two before they drove in the barn. Mrs Bennett was just coming out with a hatful of eggs. When she saw the girl she called out hello Hattie what you doing down this way. Hattie said she was just walking around. Mrs Bennett said she hadnt ought to be so strange and when she took an afternoon off she might come down and be sociable. Then Hattie said she was going to show the boarder around Harrington Hill and Mrs Bennett said that was a good idea and went down to the house. Hattie said everybody liked Mrs Bennett she was so nice. Hattie got out then and he drove the car in a corner next to a rusty tractor. When he came out of the barn Hattie

PAGANY

was fooling around with a kitten she found under the runway. The kitten was gray as a mouse and not much bigger.

He said he was going in the house to get a sweater. Hattie said shed wait for him on the porch. When he got up to his room he opened a fibre suitcase that was on the bed and took out a navyblue bathingsuit. It still had the pricetags on it. Then he sat down on the bed. There was a box of candy on the dresser. *My sister gave it to me before I went away. The wrappings on the candybox. She was wrong to waste the money. It was nice of her to think of me though. A toothbrush sticking out of a celluloid case. Cheap militarybrushes one up one down. A thin comb cutting the sides. A razor in a cardboard box. A shavingbrush that slides back in its own handle when you pull down a little button. A tube of shavingcream. A tube of toothpaste. Round and new by bent and twisted. A roadmap of New York. Two pencils. Three books. The names. A bottle of witch hazel. A bottle of fastener for my hair.* He looked in the mirror and described himself. *My face is oval. My ears dont stick out. My hair is black. My teeth are white. My lips are medium thin and plain red. My hair is flat against my head. Im not handsome. Im not homely. Im in between. Im thinking of messing up my hair. My hands are hands. My face is a face. Im in the country. The countrys different from the city. Im thinking maybe I shouldnt go walking with her.* He took the tags off his bathingsuit and threw it back in the suitcase. He combed his hair and got a sweater and went downstairs. Hattie was sitting on the porch steps. She still had the kitten and it was climbing all over her. The door slammed as he came out and the kitten was off the girl and under the steps like a shot.

They went around the barn and he followed her through a groove in the field. For a way the path edged the woods but when it began to slope up it bent and got lost in bushes and dried leaves. Greenspeckled rocks spotted like they were corroded humped up from clusters of precise ferns. Leaves that were lightbrown and lastyears powdered and gave under their feet. Small dead branches cracked. Those broke the quiet in the woods and so did squirrels sounding longsucked kisses and birds making five or six quick clear notes like a flute coming from a distance.

He didnt enjoy the climb because at every step he was ready to be afraid. He liked the sounds that came from back of the trunks of trees and bushes and piles of rock but he couldnt get used to their suddenness and their quick dyingout. He couldnt help getting himself ready for his next nervousness. There were spiders that were quick and ugly and without expression. A web came around his face and hair and he shivered

PAGANY

when he brought up his hand to brush it away. There were snakes too. When he was a boy hed killed one with a rock and carried the thing away on the end of a long stick. He dropped it in a hole along the road and then he ran home and went up to his room and he was sick for a couple of days. Hed heard of boys that liked to hunt for snakes and pick them up by their tails and snap them away quick so the back made a cracking sound. The boys said they enjoyed that. They said it was good fun but he never went with them.

Hattie was leading the way up a steep slope and he tripped and almost fell over a twisted root that looked like a thick snake. After that he was more careful. Then the ground got level and the trees opened out. From the clearing he looked down and saw Bennetts several hundred feet below. The view was very good. The day was clear and off to the north he could see seven ridges of mountains and not two ridges were the same color. About five miles away the nearest was dark green and from that to the last ridge he could see the colors went all the way from blue to lavender and purple. Each ridge waved up high peaks so when you half-closed your eyes you saw a long scalloped wall. Hattie pointed and said the peak way off there was Mount Marcy and it was the highest in the Adirondacks more than five thousand feet. He looked down along her arm and saw the peak she meant. Then she showed him White Face and a couple of others.

Hattie said if they kept on a little theyd soon come out on the dirt road again. They climbed down and then they were standing right on a shoulder of Harrington Hill where the road was carved out. He asked Hattie where it went to and she said the first place up from the bend was her fathers farm and it was plumb on top of the hill. About three miles on along the ridge was the Viele Pond property. After that the road got very bad and you could hardly get through even with a horse. Stewart Brook ran out of the pond over a rotten beaver dam and the road followed the brook downhill. Almost always at that season the brook ran over the road in a dozen places and there was a hole down there where a car got bogged down and theyd never been able to haul it out. It was there yet rusty and torn apart and that was all of ten years now.

While they were standing there talking in the middle of the road a rabbit stuck its head up from back of a mound and sat very still for a few seconds. The first move they made it was back down its hole so fast it looked like someoned grabbed it down by its tail. A small automobile came around a turn and when it got near them it stopped and two men got out. They said hello to Hattie and seemed pretty friendly with her.

PAGANY

When she tried to make an introduction she found out she didnt know the name of the person she was with. He said his name was Gibson Alfred Gibson and then the men told him their names. Robbins and Lemmon they said and they were game wardens. They said they were on their way up to Viele Pond to keep an eye open for some poachers theyd heard were up that way. Thered been some shooting near the pond for three or four nights and it was likely there was a foreign bunch in there jacking deer. Gibson asked what jacking meant and Robbins said it was hunting deer at night with a light a searchlight. You had a boat and you paddled near the shore keeping quiet and flashing your torch into the brush. The deer came down at night to feed on the lilypads and once you got the deer in the light they just stood there and looked at it and it was nothing to bring them down. The wardens said deer were out of season anyway and if they caught a poaching outfit theyd give them plenty.

Robbins and Lemmon had a lot of time to spare. They said they didnt want to get up to the pond much before dark so they took Hattie and Gibson back to their car and showed them what they called their arsenal. Lemmon opened the back of the car and brought out two heavy rifles. He explained they were leveraction 25.30 Savage repeaters and each held seven long brass shells. To show the power of the rifles Robbins put one up and fired a slug through a foot of pine tree. Then he asked Gibson if he wanted to try a few shots. Gibson said hed never fired a rifle in his life not even in a shooting gallery but he thought Hattie might laugh if he refused so he took the gun and tried to make a shot like Robbins. He didnt know the piece had an awful kick in it and held it loose against his shoulder. When he pulled the trigger he thought the rifle went to pieces in his hands. The butt jumped back in his shoulder and came near knocking him down. Of course the muzzle went off line and Robbins smiled when he said the bullet was likely still up in the air.

Lemmon said the rifles werent all they had with them. They opened their coats and each showed a .38 revolver under his left arm. Robbins took a .22 target pistol out of his pocket. Hattie got excited when she saw that and said she knew how to shoot pretty fair so Robbins handed over the pistol after he loaded it. Hattie called two hard shots and made them both. Gibson didnt want any more shooting for himself but it was sport to watch a woman handle a gun. Just then a red squirrel came out on a branch of a tall beech and froze when it saw the people below. Hattie lifted the pistol and the squirrel made a dash for cover. The girl knocked it out of the tree with two fast shots and when she went over to pick it up it was still kicking. She held it head down by its hind legs

PAGANY

and gave it a good cut back of the head with the side of her palm and after that it didnt kick any more. She brought it over to show Gibson. Both shots were hits one in the head and the other in the side. The wardens said Hattie had a good eye and after talking a little more they had to go away.

Then Hattie said shed have to go home. She offered Gibson the squirrel and said it was good eating especially the saddle and hind quarters and Mrs Bennett knew how to fry it so it tasted like chicken but Gibson said he thought the squirrel looked like a rat and he knew he wouldnt be able to eat it. Hattie said he didnt have to eat it if he didnt want to but she was sure Mrs Bennett would like it and would he take it back for her. Gibson said he didnt like to touch the squirrel. Hattie laughed and said it wouldnt bite him but she couldnt make him touch it.

Before she started up the hill she said there was going to be a dance that night for the benefit of the County Poor Home. The dance was at the Home and if hed call for her after supper they could have a fine time. The band was coming all the way from Glens Falls. Everybody was going to be there and he could meet all her friends. Gibson said he had nothing to do that night and hed be glad to go with her. Then Hattie thanked him for the walk and said shed look out for him after supper.

* * *

It was much cooler on the way back to Bennetts. The sun was throwing long shadows over his shoulder but it was still high enough up over Harrington Hill to show up against the seven ridges only now all of them were different shades of purple and seemed to make one mountain of terraces. Down in the valley where the Schroon ran through Warrensburg lights were on in the houses and streets and made a nice sight from way up there. The woods were thick and dark now and came to the edge of the road as it bent down the hill. In the brush there were all kinds of sounds and in some places where the road took a dip a wet smell came out of the trees. The road was made of clay and sand and didnt have any grooves in it so he hardly had to watch where he was walking and he wasnt ready for a beating and flapping of wings so close he could have reached out and touched the spot where it came from. Then a large bird floated off a stump and sailed down the road. It lighted on a tree and when Gibson got near again he saw it was an owl. He stopped about ten yards away because hed heard owls could be pretty bad with their beaks and claws. He picked up a couple of stones and let the bird have it. At the first pitch the owl flew in the woods and Gibson heard the sounds it made get smaller and smaller as it beat its way through the leaves.

PAGANY

By the time he got to Bennetts it was near dark and they were waiting supper for him. He washed his hands and face at the kitchen sink and sat down at the big table set over near the stove. Old man Bennett kept cracking jokes all through the meal. Mrs Bennett was there of course and so were three farmhands. They all liked Gibson and called him Mr. When Mrs Bennett got all the things off the stove she sat down and had something to eat with the men. She listened to the talk for a while and then she started to josh Gibson about making a hit with one of the nicest gals in Warren County and that was a fact. Gibson laughed and didnt mind what she said. When she asked him if he was going to the high life down at the Home that night he said yes he was taking Hattie and then they all had a laugh. Gibson felt something clawing the cuff of his pants and then the gray kitten came up his leg and in his lap. It put its forepaws on the table and took a look around like it had its pick of everything there. Mrs Bennett poured some cream in a saucer and pushed it across the table. When Gibson put it near the kitten he heard its insides start working and then the whole animal was shaking. Its pink tongue shot in and out and the cream didnt last very long. After the kitten finished it sat back and washed its mouth and whiskers and wanted to go to sleep with its head inside Gibsons sweater but he said hed have to hurry if he wanted to be on time so he gave the kitten to Mrs Bennett and went upstairs. After about ten minutes he came down again wearing a gray suit and a blue soft shirt. Mrs Bennett told him he better take a coat if he didnt want to catch his death of cold. He got the coat and said goodnight to everybody and went out to the barn to get the Ford.

At first it was so cold it didnt turn over but he got the thing running and it warmed up on the way to Hatties farm. By car it was only about ten minutes up the hill to her place. When he got there he honked his horn and Hattie came out of the house. She had on a long coat and he couldnt see what she was wearing under it but her hair was done up very tight around her head. From what Gibson could see she looked pretty good and he said so. Then she climbed in and they started down the hill.

In the valley and out along the river road they passed haywagons loaded with fellows and girls all bundled up in blankets and scarves and everybody in the wagons let out a yell when the Ford went by. In one wagon there was a girl that recognized Hattie and then they all yelled out something about Hattie and her new beau from the city.

The Home was at a place where the road crossed the Schroon and made a long climb over the ridge to Boltons Landing. When they got to the Home Gibson saw one big wing of it was lit up bright and there were

PAGANY

lanterns strung up on wires from the porch to a bunch of trees on the lawn. A lot of people were outside saying hello to each other and still more were sitting at tables where the porch was closed in. After Sanford parked the car in an open space back of the building they got out and he helped Hattie take off her coat. She was wearing a thin creamcolored muslin dress and the top of it had stitched designs of yellow crossed by light green but there wasnt so much design that it took your eye off the plain lines of the dress. Many washings had run some of the dye off the threads and onto the muslin making little blurs around the crosses but the dress was clean and it looked good on Hattie. She wore light shoes with high heels and with straps that buttoned around her ankles.

Gibson bought tickets from an old man sitting back of a table at the door. The man knew Hattie and asked after her Pa when they went by. Inside the music was going and there were about a hundred couples on the floor. Gibson was for watching the dancers a while but Hattie wouldnt have any of that and he must dance right away. He wasnt such a bad dancer so he didnt care and they went out to the floor. Hatties waist was thin and he could put his palm far around her. He kept it against her side and sometimes he felt her breast come down and touch it. Hattie liked to dance close and they went on dancing that way for a long time without having much to say. Her body was pretty light and he thought it was a pleasure to move with her near him.

In between dances she introduced him to dozens of fellows and girls and most of them looked nice. All the fellows were strong and sharp and when they smiled they showed they were glad to know you. Some of them even said they hoped Gibson stayed in Warrensburg for a time so they could get around to meeting him again. The girls were pleasant and carried on a lot and kidded Hattie when Gibson couldnt hear but he knew they were talking about him because they looked over his way once in a while and laughed when they saw he was watching.

The band started to play *Fiesta* and while they were dancing Gibson told Hattie she must be getting sick of dancing with him all evening and it was funny none of her friends asked her for a cutin or an encore. Hattie said she guessed she wasnt so popular but if he was tired of dancing with her they could trade with another couple so if there was anybody else he felt like dancing with shed arrange it for him. But Gibson said he meant it must be tiresome for her not him and he was perfectly satisfied to dance with her till his shoes wore out. That made Hattie smile with pleasure and she held him tighter than before. They both thought it was the best dance of the evening.

PAGANY

After it was over they went out on the porch to one of the tables. Bertrand came along with a fellow he introduced as Doc Cunningham and they sat down. Bertrand said he hoped Gibson liked the Bennett farm and Gibson said it couldnt be beat and he was glad hed spoken to Bertrand that day he drove up from the city. A tall blondhaired fellow took Hattie out for *Sweet and Lovely* and Gibson watched her through a window. He thought she was a fine dancer. There wasnt anything flashy about her steps. She could do anything her partner tried but she didnt put on any trimmings of her own. She didnt jerk around and Gibson admired the way her feet went from one step to the next like the whole dance was one movement. She kept up a conversation with the fellow leading her but she knew Gibson was watching her because she gave him a smile whenever she went by the window.

Bertrand waved to a man and woman and they joined the party. They were Mr and Mrs Reoux and they owned the Viele Pond property where the hunting lodge was. If he got time Gibson wasnt to miss it because there werent any better woods in all those parts. Hattie came back in time to hear the talk about the pond and asked Mrs Reoux if she could show Gibson around the place. Mrs Reoux said she could go up any time permission or no permission. Then the older people began to talk about a rumor that the D & H was going to put through a single track from Lake George to Ticonderoga.

Hattie and Gibson werent much interested in that so they talked about other things but they were at it only a couple of minutes before the band started *Dein Ist Mein Ganzes Herz* and Gibson wanted that one with Hattie. She said all right and they went out on the floor again. When Gibson found out it was the last dance he said he was glad nobody else took her out for it.

Gibson gave two couples a ride to Warrensburg. It was very cold going through the valley but Hattie looked warm enough in the coat she was wearing and Gibson was glad hed listened to Mrs Bennett about his own coat. The couples in back were singing all the way in and having a fine time and when they got onto the main street of the town they offered to stand treat to coffee at Halls because Gibson helped them with the ride but Hattie said she thought it was kind of late so they drove the other four up to Halls and left them there.

On the way up the hill neither of them said much because there was a heavy mist on the mountain and the lights of the car went against it like it was a blank wall. Gibson had to go very slow and the only talking they did till after they got past Bennetts was about the road and where

the turns were. After Bennetts there was no more fog. The sky looked a cold blue and many stars were in it especially over to the west where they were sprinkled like sand. When they got to the shoulder of the hill where theyd been that afternoon Hattie told him to stop and have a look down at Warrensburg. He did and looked where hed seen the lights in the evening. There wasnt one. The whole valley was filled with gray fog and they were a couple of hundred feet above the top of it. If the fog didnt stay down there so still it would have looked like smoke it was so thick.

Hattie said she thought he should stay in the mountains for a while and he asked her why. She said hed get better. He said he wasnt sick exactly and she said no but hed get better in the mountains than hed ever get in the city. Anybody would. He said *Its nice up here all right and the people are fine to me. The airs good and sometimes the views like nothing Ive ever seen before but I guess Id get tired of trees and dust and hills after a while.* Wasnt it better than the city. He didnt answer that but asked her if shed ever been in New York and she said yes once a couple of years ago for about three months. Then he wanted to know why she didnt stay. She was pretty and smart and likely she could make a good living there instead of slaving around on a farm four or five miles from the nearest town. Hattie said she knew she wasnt badlooking and she even thought she might have it pretty good in New York because she had an uncle there that had some kind of business and hed give her a job if she wanted one but she didnt like the city. Or it wasnt so much that. She just liked it better in the country. Then Gibson said it was the old argument city and country and hed heard it before so he was a little tired of it. You didnt get anywhere arguing like that. He guessed your taste settled it. For her the country was better. For his part give him the city every time. She said he should let her show him a thing or two now he was up in the mountains and they might open his eyes because after all you really had to stay in a place if you wanted to know about it. You maybe didnt get to like the mountains if you only stayed a few days so would he like to go up to Viele Pond with her next day. Bertrand was right when he said there was nothing like it around those parts.

She was pleased when Gibson said hed go with her. She told him shed make some sandwiches and get some fruit and they could take it along in the Ford. He wasnt to forget to bring his bathingsuit and a towel and she said he could call for her around ten in the morning. All the way up from there to Hatties farm she was talking about what shed show him and how hed like it better than any place hed ever seen. She was sure of it.

PAGANY

When he stopped the Ford in front of her house Hattie put her arms around him and kissed him a few times. Then she let go and he helped her get out of the car. He had his arm around her waist and they walked in the grass back of the house where it was wet like itd been raining. The fog was spreading up from the valley and all the trees had it in their upper branches like smoke and most of the branches were hidden so that they were walking in an orchard of poles. When they got near the barn Hattie said if he wanted to talk some more it was warmer in there and the, could sit on the haypile. He said all right so they went in. When they sat down in the hay she put her arms around him again and kissed him many times. She had a good mouth and he liked the taste.

He could hear the cattle clumping on the wooden floor and every once in a while a horse kicked out a hoof and it hit the side of a stall. Over to one side was the henhouse and from it there came a low clucking of birds. Outside the barn there wasnt a sound. Gibson lay back in the hay. Hattie was right next to him and her face was only a couple of inches from his when she leaned over him. He tried to put his arms around her but one of his hands touched her breast and stayed there. Then he got excited when he found out shed let him do anything to her so he sat up and said he thought itd be better if he went back to Bennetts. It was late. They walked out to the car and before he got in they kissed each other again. After that she said she still wanted him to see Viele Pond and was he coming for her at ten. He said yes.

* * *

At ten oclock he was back there for her. Hattie came out of the house with a paper bundle and her bathingsuit wrapped up in a towel. She was wearing a gray dress and low shoes without stockings. They were glad to see each other and when they got a little up the road out of sight of the farmhouse she moved over close and kissed him. The road was bad and in hollows there were deep ruts filled with water where itd drained off the slopes on both sides. Almost all the way the trees came together over the road but in the clear spaces the road was firm and Gibson could go over it at a good clip. Chipmunks and rabbits ran across the road in lots of places and once they saw a grousehawk coasting low over a small marsh where the trees had no leaves and a brook came out and ran under the road. Hattie asked him to stop just before they came to the planks over the brook and not to make any noise but follow her. She walked up to the bridge and lay on it belly down with her head over the side looking at the water. Gibson did the same thing and his face wasnt more than a foot from the water. Soon a bunch of small fish came

PAGANY

swimming out from under the boards. They stood out clear against the tan bottom with their fins and tails moving very slow to keep them from going down with the current. The fish had little round designs on their sides and backs. Hattie whispered they were brooktrout and then she dropped a pebble in the water and the trout disappeared so quick it was hard to believe theyd ever been there.

They went back to the car and drove on. The road was sloping down a little in front of them now and there was no more brush in the woods but the trees were still so thick no sun came through anywhere to light up the piles of brown leaves that covered the ground. Sometimes right in the middle of the woods there was a boulder as big as a barn and all greened over with moss. Once Gibson got his eye on a big gray squirrel as it made a long jump from one tree to another. Hattie showed him a lot of different kinds of trees birch beech walnut black spruce.

A long slab of rock made up the next fifty feet of road and at the end of it there was a deep hole that almost tore the car in half. After that there was a clearing and a very small frame house without a porch. Over the door was the word *Buckhorn*. Above that and right under the eaves were nailed the bleached antlers and skull of a deer. Hattie said the house belonged to some people from Utica but no oned been up to use it for years. A little while later the slope on the left side of the road went down instead of up and then through the leaves on that side Hattie pointed to the water of Viele Pond. They went around a bend and came to the hunting lodge belonging to the Reoux. It was a goodsized house made of timber and with a wide low porch that was only ten feet from the road. Gibson pulled the car in alongside the house in the grass of a clearing on the right of it. From there on down past the back of the house the clearing sloped away till it met the woods again in a dark grove of pines.

They took the stuff out of the car and went down to the grove. The needles were so thick their feet sank in up to the ankles. On the other side of the grove the pond came in again. They put their things under a tree and went out on a small dock for a look around. You couldnt see the house from there but the pond was spread out all around you. Except for a large open space in the middle of it the pond was choked with water-lilies that dotted the surface everywhere.

Hattie said she was going in for a swim while the sun was high. Was he going in. No. Why not. He said he didnt feel like it. Itd be fun watching her though and she shouldnt stay out just on account of him. She didnt ask him again but got her suit and went back of a pine. Gibson stayed on the dock and looked around the pond. On the far side it was

PAGANY

pretty wild. From where he was it looked like a marsh with the stumps of rotted trees coming up out of the water. Among the stumps were longstemmed green and brown cattails and back of those where the water ended was a broad stretch of leafless brush that went back up the slope through dead trees till the green ones of the woods started again. Everywhere else the trees grew thick right down to the edge of the pond and white clumps of birch leaned out over the water. From around a small point Gibson heard water spilling away and he guessed that must be the dam Hattie spoke about the day before.

Then she came out from back of the tree and walked down to the dock holding the towel and her bathingcap in her hand. He thought her shape was very good. Her body was brown wherever he could see and pretty well rounded off especially at the waist and thighs. He helped her get in a flatbottomed boat that was at the dock and then with a broken oar he paddled through the thick mass of lily pads out to the clear water. When he got to the middle she anchored the scow by dumping out a large rock that was tied to a ring in the seat with a long length of clothesline. Hattie put her cap on and then she stood up and went over the side. In a couple of seconds she was up squirting a jet of water out of her mouth and blowing and puffing while she tried to tell him how cold the water was. She swam around the boat in a wide circle three or four times and finally got warm enough to turn over and float on her back. Gibson thought about his body. *Just as my face is only a face so my body is only a body. There's nothing about it to make it different. It's the same as almost every other body. It has no large clusters of muscle and no unusual abilities. In some places it's too thin and in others too large. Its toes are a bit twisted. Its feet are too much like planks. Its white all over except in the face where it's a yellowy brown. I've too much hair on my face and not enough under my arms and under my belly.*

Hattie swam over to the boat and hung on the side. Gibson touched her face and arms and liked the feel of the cold drying water on them. Then she climbed in and stretched herself out along a seat to get some sun and dry off. A lazy blue and gray bird came over a hill and Hattie said it was a heron. It flew to the marshy end of the pond and came down standing in shallow water looking like one of the dead stumps. Hattie shouted across the water and the heron went up in the air again and over to a bare tree way up the hill. Hattie asked Gibson to keep his eyes on a certain clump of birch. He did and after a minute or two a blue and white bird dived out of it fast down to the water. It was a kingfisher

Hattie said and when it came out of the water again it had a small fish in its bill and had to work hard to get up in the air again.

Hattie said they should go back to shore and eat the stuff shed brought so Gibson paddled in to the dock. Hattie said to lay out the food under a tree and get some water from the well back of the house and shed get dressed in the meantime. Itd only take her a minute. First he went up to the well and found a bucket hanging on a nail in a tree. He filled the bucket and took it back to the grove. On the way he got a look at Hattie. She didnt have anything on and she was drying herself with the towel. She looked up and saw him but she didnt yell or try to cover up or anything like that. Then he went closer and leaned against a tree a few feet away. Where the sun hadnt hit her she was very white and the spots of red on her breasts were small as pennies.

He said hed wait while she dressed and she kept on like there was no one there. All the time he didnt take his eyes off her but she wasnt ashamed. She put on her dress and then sat down to get the pine needles off her feet before she put on her shoes. Gibson didnt move till she finished and when she did after running a comb through her hair a few times they went out to where the food was. Shed brought some ham and cheese sandwiches and several pieces of fruit. They ate that and washed it down with drinks out of the bucket.

Then they went over to the other side of the grove where the dam was and lay down in the needles. Gibson had his head on Hatties shoulder and smoked a cigarette while they listened to the noise the water made falling from the pond to the rocks. Hattie asked him if hed ever heard a thrush and he said no so she told him to be quiet and listen. Gibson listened and the only sound came from the water in Stewart Brook but when he got used to that he heard the same string of fast notes that hed listened to the afternoon before. Hattie said that was a thrush a wood-thrush. She said it had a fine voice and he said yes and asked her if she liked the music of birds. She said she did and she listened to it a long time whenever she was in the woods and to thrushes so much she could even make their call. Gibson said can you and he wanted to hear so she made her lips in an odd shape and twisted her fingers in front of them. Then he heard some clear high notes that sounded like they came out of a reed. She did it two or three times and he said it was pretty good. She told him a thrush made its notes so fast she had to hang around for weeks before she got them. Shed teach him if he wanted. He said it wouldnt do any good because if he whistled like that in front of his friends in the city theyd say he was a fairy but it was nice to hear her though. Hattie

PAGANY

wanted to know why theyd say he was a fairy if he did that and he said theyd all want to know what kind of music he was whistling and hed have to tell them he was imitating a thrush. When he told them that theyd laugh out loud at him. A thrush theyd say. Thats a hot one and when you going to take to leaping around woodland dells in a pair of pink drawers. Hattie said she didnt exactly see the connection between imitating a thrush and dancing in pink drawers. Gibson said he went around with fellows that were kind of critical and they had expressions that meant a lot more than they seemed to. It was hard to explain.

Hattie said she could see he didnt like the country much but she couldnt understand why and asked him to tell her. Gibson said *while you were getting undressed and I was on the dock I pulled a waterlily out of the pond. I took a smell of it and my stomach almost turned it was so sweet. Then I looked out on the pond and saw all those thousands of open waterlilies and I knew that right after the sun went down all the flowers would close up and stay that way till tomorrow. The rest of the countrys just like that. The lilies open and close all the time. Everything comes out and goes away in its season. You cant say much for that. You cant keep on describing it and liking it as much the hundredth time as the first. In the country the big things the season but in the city there arent any seasons and you dont know what to expect. Here the corn comes up and you know what corn looks like and the trees and hills and sky are always the same. As far as Im concerned one ear of corns the same as every ear of corn and one trees like all the other trees. Where I live in the city theres a tree in our backyard. From here right now I can see ten thousand trees but you cant expect me to get that many times as excited.* Hattie said she guessed it wasnt so exciting selling neckties either and Gibson said *When you come right down to it itsnt any worse selling neckties than it is hoeing potatoes all day or walking five miles to school.* Gibson waited a while and then he said he was going to drive back to New York the next day. Hattie said she had no idea he was going away so soon she thought hed be there a couple of weeks. He said yes he thought so too but hed changed his mind. Hattie said she was sorry he was going because they could be good friends and have good times if he stayed. Gibson said if she ever went to New York she should look him up and he wrote out his address on a card and gave it to her. She said she didnt think shed get down to the city. Gibson said sure she would.

Lemmon came up along Stewart Brook then and sat down when Hattie asked him to. He told them theyd had some luck with the poachers. Late the night before thered been some firing over by Black Spruce

PAGANY

Mountain. That wasnt near water so they guessed the poachers had got scared of shooting too much around Viele Pond. They started out across country in the dark and caught three of the poachers in the act of lugging away a big buck. Robbins had them covered and they couldnt see where he was but even so one of the fellows wanted to fight it out and put his gun up to let the wardens have it. Robbins figured there wasnt any other way so he let fly with his .38 and got the man in the leg. All three were from Albany and worked for a hotel outfit. The wounded man was carried off by his two friends and Robbins was with them in the car on the way back to the Lake George lockup. Lemmon said he was staying behind to pick up others of the party if there were any. He said it would go pretty hard with the fellows they arrested and also the hotel people. It wasnt often now anybody tried to pick off a warden but there were a lot of folk that didnt give a damn what the woods were like as long as they managed to get some meat out of it. Lemmon said hed always liked the woods and wanted to keep them like they were and strangers never did a place any good. He didnt mean Gibson he said. They always took what they could get and to hell with the man that came along next. Well hed have to move on Lemmon said. He was glad hed seen Gibson again. The warden nodded to Hattie and went away through the grove toward the road.

Gibson and Hattie drove back to Hatties farm and he said goodbye to her there.



for P. B.

SLEEPY DRIVING

Dudley Fitts

Falling asleep, Mr Thánatos, with you driving
down the bright road in the afternoon sun;
sleepy against your shoulder, you don't mind, driving
down to Cousin Polly's and her cats,
down, back to Traveler and General Lee,
to Galahad, and the stuffed Moose:

('bleeding-heart, acacia, primrose':
the violets we picked, always she chose

PAGANY

the big ones for table: 'acacia, bleeding-
heart, primrose': new peppermints in ranks
hardening on the slab in the kitchen pantry
(mustn't go near them): she said 'Gardening's
God's kitchen', she said 'Primrose,
all the english poets have mentioned the primrose.'

. . . to Joel the warming-pan leaning against the hearth,
Lord Dexter's marvelous ladle, to Grand-uncle Frank's
company, first in the Crater, to *Old Dog Tray*
and *The Sword of Bunker Hill*, to Aurora, and rows
of tatting-shuttles, to the *Works* of Doctor Garth:

sleepy,

sleepy tired, Mr Thánatos, but fond of you,
falling asleep (*good-night*), with you, devising
petals of lips and eyes (*sleep tight*), saying
her breasts into acacia, bleeding-heart: her thighs
are morning-glory, lilac her arms and knees,
'primrose',

and after,

Nothing . . . but purring wind and the long sun's laughter
sweeping faithfully down the sleepy bright road
to Cousin Polly and Joel and General Lee
(oh to General Lee and all clever animals
in gentle deft cortège)

into sleep, in to

sleepy kisses and spring and the primrose you say is home.



THE TEMPERING

Richard Johns

Everyone looked quite as always, hectic, desperately gay. Mary Oates scanned the upturned faces with little interest, rose languidly and took Paul's arm.

"I am faint," she said, "sick of this silly talk of a sail to Toulon.

PAGANY

Let us go on the terrace. I never tire of the sea. Oh, but people bore me." She sailed out over the beloved water.

George Benton turned to Dick. "Stunning, isn't she, even yet?"

Dick nodded, raised the champagne again to his lips, tired of these people, their talk of light Ladies and Lords, Contesses and poets, defraught novelists, themselves. Somehow he had expected brilliance, assurance and easy gaiety here. But they talked on of their little plans for lechery, of absent friends and their bed-room manners.

His eye suddenly caught sight of a tall girl, stopped, talking at a nearby table. Her hair was dark over a soft, luminous face, her body pliant, suave in a sheath of silver. George, who was getting up to dance with Marcia, saw his attention, leaned down to whisper.

"Here's Natalie. You'll like her, she's the best kid in town. You'll get along."

He squeezed Dick's arm fondly.

* * *

Natalie Stevens was gay, had been diligently so for ten years, ever since Easton Crane had insulted her. She had been polite society before that, a decorous girl sufficiently on the inside to have her picture regularly in the paper. Crane had found her just that, been intrigued by her ripeness, tried to have her. Now she remembered him with mingled pleasure and exasperation. He had been the first man to interest her to any degree and quite the first to hurt her. She recalled with embarrassment his insolence when she had demurred at his expectation, she having foolishly accepted his invitation to his apartment after the theatre one night. "What do you think I asked you here for?" he had asked as she shrunk against the wainscoting, "Surely not to tell you all over again how lovely I might find you, what pearly teeth and so on." She never forgot his wide, contemptuous smile as she had fled down the stairs before him, called a taxi before he could reach her side. "You fool," he said. "You fool." and slammed the door behind her.

Now her laughter was all for herself, the little girl she had been, the great ache he had left with her, coloring years which should have been light and carefree with an uneasy sense of something lovely lost. Ten years had done much for her, eased an introspective adolescence into rather brittle acceptance of things and people as they came, letting nothing become too important, making comfort in all things her assurance. Her popularity was no doubt largely due to the remote quality of amusement she gave everything and everyone. Men got tired of intense, involved

PAGANY

women, feeding their egos with passionate love, with slightly besotted romanticizing, came to her for coolness, comradeship.

At Oates table, where Natalie had gone at once, she detected the new face, sensed in it an uneasiness, almost a weary disdain for those who were making their pretense at being amusing, liking one another. Everyone was a little drunk after an afternoon on the beach with many cocktails in the heat, Ruth and Sara boisterous and loud. Dick lifted his heavy eyes as she came, moved from his seat to draw one up for her. She sat down and introduced herself, found out from him merely his name, Dick Adams, that he was there with George. She talked to him, intrigued at finding someone so different. "And do you paint, or do you write?" she asked. He merely shook his head, diffidently, with no enthusiasm for what it might be that he did do. "And what?" she asked, and he said "Nothing." She saw him young, bitter with a youthful bitterness that those about him, older, were no surer, held no promise of maturity for him. "You," he said at last, "And you?" So she shook hers, held out her arms to him as he suggested a dance. And in his arms suddenly she felt it, knew the tight pain within him, the need for the moment to be held strongly, cradled in a woman's arms, loved and held possessively. And he knew she knew, looked down into her eyes and smiled a smile that tore her subtly, inwardly.

His eyes opened a trifle, seemed for the moment awake to the group about, the loud shrillness of escape. "Is this the best there is?" he asked at last, openly, without preamble, "Is this the Europe where people come to live, do things, make."

She laughed at him, sensing he needed laughter, would welcome it. "This isn't all of it. Drop around tomorrow. We'll take a walk. I'll show you a bit more than you will ever see here. And I—?" She was quizzical. "Am I, too, like the others to you?" There was no flirtation in this, a straight question for him to consider.

"You don't seem so—" He paused, feeling for a word.

She helped him with it. "Eager?"

"Maybe," he answered. "Maybe that's it."

Natalie was surprised at herself. Here she was again open to a sense of swoon in the arms of another, the touch of the hand, a persuasive knee and thigh while dancing. Dick, here, came as something new to her, seemed so out of place. Sensing the tingle of feeling between them, the contact, at the same time she felt him out of place in the world, guessed him incongruous anywhere, wanted intensely to give him ease.

They finished the dance, went back to sit, feeling the other a friend,

PAGANY

closed somehow against the rest. Natalie asked and found out that he had come there with Benton, who had found him in some crew cafe down in Marseilles, brought him along the coast with him for a few weeks of rest.

She was nettled when George looked over and suggested that he and Dick run along. "You wanted to see the bistros; now's the best time. See you all tomorrow." He looked keenly at Natalie, laughed to see her a bit perturbed, for once off her guard.

When they had gone, lightly, with a wave of the hand, the room seemed loud and dull to her. She excused herself early, went home to bed.

* * *

Dick was quiet as he and George went down the hill toward the waterfront. Benton finally spoke, a thin layer of amusement on his words—"Well, what do you think of it, the menagerie?" He laughed, a touch of shame for himself in his voice, for his popularity there. "They're really not so bad, all of them; you seemed to like Natalie Stevens."

Dick looked out at the bay, the immaculate little house along the quays, the people in festive summer attire, modeled on all sorts of uniforms and provincial costumes, none of them real or native in such a place. It was a light musical-comedy scene to look at, he wondered about the life beneath it all, comparing it with the life of the bordello he had so recently left. And George, how different George was here, sort of a dressed-up hero in his jaunty cap, set high off his forehead, his striped sleeveless jersey tucked closely into his smart form-fitting sailor pants.

Dick recalled him drunk, inflamed with vitality and disgust for the proprieties of living, rushing into Madame Renée's, setting the whole crowd up with champagne, roaring with delight at the pornographic pictures, talking lengthily to the Madame, who kept patting his head affectionately, pouring out a drink for him once in a while. Dick had had a hangover, was getting over a two-day debauch he had started directly upon leaving the boat, throwing up a miserable stoke-hole job he'd held for six months. He'd been lying on a sofa in the corner, sick of his whole life, the sad compromise between what he imagined life might be for him and the actuality he had put up with in an aimless bumming about on odd jobs. And here beside him, practically to him, a man, some ten years older, poured forth a vocal torrent of delight in living, the best of it and the worst. Dick, feeling scummy, had looked up at him, liked him, admiring and envying whatever it was that kept the other from feeling unclean,

PAGANY

even in such a dive, reached out his hand from a lingering alcoholic daze and patted his shoulder.

"Good boy." he muttered, "Good boy."

George looked over, saw a handsome youngster with deep, broody eyes above a straight nose, a little moustache trying at the moment rather vainly to appear jaunty, saw a well set up body lax with liquor. "What the Hell is a kid like you doing here?" he'd asked. "You don't have to pal around with these do you?"

The boy's eyes had darkened. "Oh, why bother?" he said. "I thought from the way you were talking that you might understand."

George groaned. "Don't start the story of your life, what you think and feel about things here. What you may or may not do's all right, but the other's out." He laughed ruefully at himself. "I'm a great one to be talking. This is about the only place left they listen to me any longer. God know's I'm not the one to kick."

Dick had sat up, the Madame poured out more drinks. The men got along well. In a little while George had decided he'd be glad to take Dick back up the coast with him, give him a chance at a rest, Dick was glad to go, looked forward to the chance of meeting some real people.

And here he was, here were the people. For two days he and George had rested, lazed about the house, getting to know each other, like each other. As he felt better Dick had been impatient to get out and meet these people George talked about, told stories of, Mary Oates, Marcia, Hoffmann and the others. And now he'd met them, seen their hectic desperation, their play to him as to something novel. He guessed that to Oates he was a slightly cleaned-up sailor, something off the sea, romantic but dimmed through a freshly-washed and rightly clothed body. Had he appeared as he looked in the stoke-hole, grimy with dirt, half naked and exposed, she would have been more alive to him. The same was true of the others, all save Natalie, whom he had liked, looked forward to seeing the next day.

They turned into a bistro, sat down and ordered drinks. "This," said George, "is where there's really life in the town, it's actual and, God knows, evil enough."

Dick looked, saw prostitutes and pimps, saw sailors dancing together, dancing with pretty boys with made-up eyes, found it no different than the same sort of place in Brooklyn or Charlestown at home. When he said so George nodded.

"I suppose it's just because I've lived so long abroad, picked up my

sins here that I feel them limited to the Continent." He looked at Dick shyly. "Would you dance?"

Dick was amazed but hid it. "I'd step all over you, I'm afraid." He smiled. "Go ahead. I don't mind."

As George wheeled away on the arm of a sailor, Dick collected his thoughts, found himself rather amused. So George had tried everything, was really heavy in his lightness, in the search for new sensation. If he had not been apologetic Dick would not have thought anything remarkable, well versed himself in any sort of feeling. So George was a hard-working playboy, a sort of grand dilettante of sensation. He could not be happy, then, was really only talking, wishing himself what he stated so blithely in the bordello. He looked up to find a stout, effeminate man standing by his chair.

"Are you with Benton," he lisped, fixing a watery eye on the boy, disinterested, sexless.

As Dick replied George saw the man, came over, asked him to sit down. After introducing him as Emil Sanders they talked, George asked after the Duchesse.

"She's just outside," said Emil. "We went to the Casino and they said we'd find you here. She wants to see you again."

"Bring her in, bring her in. The place is perfectly safe and she'd be amused. I'd like to see her tonight."

As Emil went through the door George threw back his head and roared. "Here's a good laugh for you, kid. You've never seen anything like this before. The old girl's all of eighty and still feels like a chicken. She's toured Europe for years with Emil, who's a tenor, sings divinely. I met them in Vienna, was amused at what would happen if she met a real man on the make and sent them on to Brauberg, where they have young fresh mountain men to dance with the old hags. I went by, purposely, a few weeks later, found her more skittish than ever, still a little frightened of what she wanted, but on the way. Emil of course, was like a hornet, it'll do him good to worry a bit."

Dick felt badly, sorry for the old girl, ashamed of George. He poured down his drink quickly, saying nothing. George caught his arm. "Here she is," he whispered, gleeful.

In the door stood an old wreck, hideous under paint and masquerade, balancing herself in tiny slippers which must have nearly killed her, her eyes beady and bright under carefully plucked brows, her face a mask of enamel. Her body was a sack, shapeless, pitifully frail, ready for death and decay. But the eyes were those of a child, an eager youngster feeling

PAGANY

sex in herself for the first time, longing to rub up against something. She came over on Emil's arm, greeted George as an old friend. "We must have champagne," she cackled. "You see I followed. I knew where you were it would be gay enough." Her eyes became knowing. "Is there a man in the room? I want to dance."

George, chuckling, suggested Dick, who got up politely. He swung the old bag of skin and bones around the room once, repelled by her swift breathing, the heat of her in his arms. Purposely he stepped lightly on her toe, allowed her to suggest that they sit down.

"Oh, I love this," she cooed. "We must have a big party tomorrow. Sing, Emil, sing."

Emil declined, shrilly but firmly. The champagne came and they all drank.

"What the Hell," thought Dick, "I've no right to be annoyed." set out to be pleasant.

The Duchesse got drunk easily, was soon a little careless. She pulled Dick over close to her, fondled his hand, immune to the stares from all around. Finally, with a little sigh, she put her head down on the table, asked to be taken home. "I'm so tired," she stated. "But wait till you see me tomorrow. It was a long trip."

They saw her in her car, walked slowly back up the hill to George's house. Dick was quiet, wondering what next, schooling himself to be surprised at nothing. So when George came in, sometime later to say goodnight, he was prepared.

* * *

Dick looked down at Natalie, curled up in the bottom of the boat at his feet. "This is nice," he said. "Simply nice, as I had forgotten things could be." Natalie, sleepy, nodded her head, watching her fingers trailing through the water.

"Are you here for long?" she queried, not much interested, forgetful of her intensity the night before.

"Who knows?" said Dick. "I hope so on a day like this, easy and cool." He stopped paddling, let his hand rest for a moment on her hair. She looked up and smiled, lightly.

"This isn't showing you the life of town, is it? But then it's pleasanter. Let's skim along the shore to Antelle, have a swim from the rocks."

Half an hour got them there, they undressed behind two rocks, met in the cool blue of the sea. Dick found himself at ease, quite empty of any wish to know her body, willing to laze through the water after her at slow pace.

PAGANY

Suddenly she swam up against a rock, bruising herself, standing up to see the hurt. Close behind her, he nearly fell against her as she rose, steadied himself, stood up to stumble on the rock, fall prone upon her. She laughed, a quick excitement in her voice, her hands playfully pushing him from her. And Dick, suddenly, was caught up in a maze of adolescent sensation, memory of a hot night of summer, cool flesh in his arms. He looked up into her eyes and she felt it, the strange unhappy tension of his days, the uneasy glancing, the weak, disturbing satisfactions, frightening. With a little croon, half maternal, she held him close, sexlessly, smoothed his hair back, closed his eyes against her breast, tried without words to give him rest and ease.

Dick, in wonder, relaxed, felt her a like person, felt the moment sure and lovely like a childhood recollection glossed with dream and drama. But her hand stroking so easily his temple was persuasive as she did not mean it to be, was an excitation. Dick, embarrassed, conscious suddenly of their nakedness, his brain sniggering at the touch of her flesh close against his own, stirred against her, drew himself away sharply, swam back toward their clothes without a word, ashamed, afraid to look at her.

Natalie followed after, understanding his physical reticence, heated by it. She watched him run up the beach, hiding himself from her, grab up his clothes, going behind some bushes to dress. Where would he go at last, where would he hide himself against the need of another person? Would he become a part of the life about him, a plaything for George or some old woman? It might easily be a solution for him, but too simple and sordid for satisfaction. She wanted him, in her wish for him felt herself ripely virginal, renewed.

As he paddled back, his eyes everywhere but upon her, hers were quick with interest, chasing up and down his arms, his legs, thighs and at last to his face, moody, the frightened face of a child, knowing strange emotions. They did not speak.

* * *

The Duchesse held her breath, allowed it to hiss out between her teeth. This was what she had dreamed of, this was the life she had sought from Baden-Baden to Pamplona,—a ripe sexiness in the air stirred her sluggishly. Fondly she patted her new chestnut wig, felt the bright sheen of hair soft above the hard, enamelled forehead, so white and firm. She took a small glass from her bag, found herself attractive in the dim light of the room, regarded her claw-like fingers, gleaming with gems. Her mind, old, a bit wandering at times, directed her eyes to the young men

there, each one in turn. Benton she did not too much like, detected underlying amusement in his politeness to her, did not feel interest in Paul or John. But the men of the port, fresh in off the sea, stirred her imagination, caught her fancy strongly. One in particular, big, handsome in a coarse way, eyes wandering leisurely about the room, excited her. He seemed to notice her, to return her stare. The Duchesse was fluttered, very much warmed.

When Dick Adams came in she was drunk, a little careless, openly playing up to the sailor, who had not yet come over but was about to. George had seen him there before, whispered to Dick that what would happen might be amusing, that the Duchesse was ripe and the man would do anything for money. At last she rose, went toward him, a drink in her hand. Her cracked voice was filled with coquettish concern, a hot interest. The party watched them talking together, saw her handling his hand, playfully and shyly patting his arm, his back and thigh. Suddenly, with a tiny squeal, she launched herself against him, tried to kiss him. Emil had just come in, stood by the table with horror in his watery eyes. He went over to her, pleading. They could hear him imploring: "Ma chère, come home, come home." She shook him off impatiently, whispered in the sailor's ear, he shook his head, she whispered again and he took her arm, half led, half carried her from the room.

Dick could not laugh, did not join the others in their mirth. It was too ridiculous, the aged, dried-up caricature of a woman and the money-minded man. Natalie viewed him disconsolately, feeling that they were all doing little to help him, much to harm him. When he got up to dance with her he seemed scarcely conscious of her in his arms, of the closeness of their flesh, the possibilities. And Dick was thinking "What is she doing here, this lovely child, what is she doing with all these half-alive, inhuman bungs."

"Won't you come out?" he said. "Won't you take a walk?"

She acceded, happy to be away from the rest of them, to be alone with him again.

The moon was full, persuasive, set their blood in a stir, held them closer. At the end of the plage they turned, walked slowly back, nothing having been said.

Finally Dick spoke, shyly. "Why do you stay here? What have these creatures for you? You are alive, young, you and George, and yet you both seem strangely lost, strangely gone in the scene about you. Come away, down the shore, there must be a simpler place where you might be happy."

PAGANY

She shook her head. "For you, perhaps; we've hardly given you much, can lay no claim to even having amused you. And yet you came here wretched, finding life strange and you in it strange; now in just a day or so you seem somehow surer, less cut up. What is it? Don't you care any more? Are you like the rest, becoming like the rest, in drugged submission."

He laughed a little hollowly. "No, I don't think so. Perhaps it's seeing those I once thought to admire so little what I guessed them. It makes me feel that I haven't messed too badly what I've had of life as yet. Strangely they give me assurance that I can do better with myself. I don't feel licked any more."

She turned in front of him, looked up into his eyes. "I'm glad. You know I like you."

He leaned and kissed her.

"Come with me tonight," she said. He held her close, her scented head tight against his cheek. After a moment they went up the hill together, thoughtless of the night, suddenly dark and secret about them.

* * *

He awakened slowly, deliciously. He could hear Natalie in the other room, rattling china and silver, could smell the pungence of roasting coffee. With a little moan of sheer content he stretched himself, gazed out through the window, over the colored roofs to the blue sheet of the bay. To be in love amid such loveliness, to feel really in love and satisfied for the first time in his life was a rich relaxation.

Natalie came in to find him propped against pillows, his hair tousled and shining in the sun, eyes closed against its brightness. Within her stirred a sharp fear, a restless possessiveness; she felt slipping away from under her all the pindling props which had kept physical sensation merely a pleasant game for so long. As she looked at him, unaware of her intense scrutiny, she knew it was not going to be easy, this affair, for her, was going to cut into her somehow, deeply. She could not think of letting him go back to George, to what George might do to him, to Oates, or Marcia, to anyone. She wanted him here, a great, grave stranger in her bed, religious about her body, allowing himself to let go completely and crushingly only at the last, when the gauge was no longer his to control. Afterwards he had been kind, disparaging of his richness, soothing her into repose, quiet sleep in his arms. She had awakened in this possessive mood, allowing herself delicious sensations as he slept close against her, unaware of her.

And now that she saw him awake she ran to him, held his head close

to her breast, breathing the keen scent of his maleness, allowing her hands the knowledge of his tense, strong body.

And Dick, raised from content, a new sense of cleanliness and of having found a woman he could honor yet lie with in pleasure and reverence, transported suddenly into a strange, manual seduction, was repelled, disheartened, turned cold in the knowledge of something precious destroyed. This hot, moaning female was not to be thought of as the same he had known so beautifully the night before.

And Natalie, feeling him deadened against her, held her head upon his shoulder, quieting herself with difficulty. He patted her hair spasmodically, crooning to her softly.

She got up suddenly and left the room. In five minutes, brittle, attractively dressed, she called him for coffee.

* * *

The Duchesse lay back in her beach-chair, wishing in such heat she might go into the sea, allow herself the under-water intimacies of the younger people. Her eye caught and fastened on Dick Adams, prone in the sun a short distance from her, his almost overdeveloped body soft in the warmth. Heat suffused her, she allowed herself careful scrutiny, finally threw a pebble ineffectively, called out in a small, cracked voice.

Dick turned, saw her, with a smile walked over, sat in the sand by her side.

"You are looking better, boy," she whispered. "You looked badly when I first saw you. It must be that you are happy?"

He nodded, half believing it as he watched Natalie in the sea, saw her at ease, playing lightly with a group of her friends. Here, always, on the beach, he loved her, she seemed renewed, all he could wish her.

"I am happy," he said, forgetting the importunate nights, the shrill need to be assured of all his love, the constant questioning about George, Ruth and Sara, even the Duchesse, the stormy scenes of tears and sweat.

He felt the jewelled hand of the Duchesse tremulous on his back, caressing. "You have been on the sea?" she asked. "You are strong and straight."

He answered easily, telling her light little bits out of his past, finding them again for himself colorful and varied, free. She listened with closed eyes, revelling in stories of youth enriched with comradeship and easy love. To her, whose youth had been an early marriage to an old Duke and celibacy for so many years after his death, Dick's words were of complete happiness. He, reading her reaction on her face, fell silent,

PAGANY

moody with wonder, feeling perhaps he had not known when he was well off.

"It sounds pleasanter than it was, than I thought at the time," he mused aloud.

The Duchesse's hand touched his hair, slid down over his face to his chest, thrilling to the hard, pectoral plumpness. "We do not know when we are gay, free, do not know what life, in its fullness, really is. Taught to pursue it as a dream we do not recognize it when we are in it. And now I'm too old. There is nothing left for me except to squeeze the last ounce of sensation out of my decay. It is no longer happiness I look for. It's too late."

Dick, suddenly feeling maternity in this hideous wreck, laid his head against her withered breast, held her hand loosely.

"The end of life is to kill, what we find, simply, in our little interlude may well be happiness, even the sight of the world, the awakening in the morning, healthy or ill, is remarkable enough in itself for our appreciation. These people have no right to be so frantic in their search, they kill their chance of finding anything rewarding. Somehow they feel something owed them, God knows why or for what reason they think it. Even your sweet Natalie, boy."

Her eyes filled with tears. "My only excuse is age, starvation, poor enough, but I make no apologies for it. It is too late for anything else but bad manners for a famished woman."

Dick looked up to see Natalie approaching, disengaged himself from the Duchesse, squeezing her fingers as he did so. Natalie looked forbidding. "Bring her to supper tonight," whispered the old woman. Dick nodded, bent and kissed the sunken cheek, went to Natalie who had waited a short way off, impatiently tapping her foot.

* * *

The night closed in, closed the three of them about the single candle on the table, each gazing in sudden, overwhelming distraction away from the others, with hard, careless smiles tightening themselves into brittleness when their glances crossed; hearts swaying to the rhythm of the music from the terrace below, the mimosa-laden air hot about them.

Natalie gazed out over the light-sprayed harbor, past the boats at anchor, the jetty of the lighthouse, dreamed herself dancing madly on a moonswept deck before Dick, alone, away from the false gaiety and chi chi which made up her life in such a place, away from jeweled wrecks like the Duchesse, senile decay which swept poverty-touched youth into bed and out again, rapaciously; spasmodic, nerve-ridden harpies sating themselves

with such surface-tickling as would keep in abeyance the deep bestiality lurking in the framework of their starved, jaded lust. That a woman like the Duchesse could for a moment rouse any sort of man into sufficient passion to satisfy her revolted Natalie. She visualized the old bespangled harriidan in heat, moisture gathered in the wrinkles of her senile flesh, sharp convulsions catching her thin milk-white legs, knotted and blue with veins—the whole hideous travesty of a human body with youth in her arms, shaking her into satiety and repose. And Dick, was he with his unhappy restlessness, his sad fatigue, his despair of finding what he might find in the search for living, about to let go, become another plaything for the Duchesse, a fancy-boy to take Emil's place? Sad it was that she had taken the sailor, found there was more in it all for her than the stuffed eunuch-like tenor could give her, a warmer stream within her his lumpy fatness could not approach.

The Duchesse thought little, wanted much, dreamed herself at the head of a roomful of pleading boys, dreamed Emil singing *O Paradiso* while she chose Dick, led him to a darkly-dim alcove, undressed him carefully and lovingly, his body, sleek, strong, eager for her. Emil still sang, it was a heavenly voice, sang through her dream of consummation, invisible, just heard. Strange that there was such sex in the voice, none in the man. He was namby-pamby, a squeaking rat to her from now on. Her heart fluttered in the recollection of the sailor, his strength, coarse brutality. He said—"You're paying, lady, you're the boss" when she had strained against him so soon again. He was gone, but she was glad. He'd been too matter-of-fact, too sneeringly just on the make for money. She raised her eyes to Dick, felt his mood distant, abstract, with a tinkling laugh settled back to imagination.

Dick, blue, blue with the sea and the deepening night, the shade of Natalie's dress, the eye-shadow of the Duchesse, felt the need of leaving, going; going anywhere that he might not sense the taut vibrations of other people's nerves, their unhappy hysteria, about themselves, the others about them. They made rotten and foul the beauty they besmirched with their smart sexiness, their syncopated jiggling of their bodies, sad toys each for another, often a number of others. Natalie he loved, found her one he might want in another place, might cherish, enjoy fully, free from fear of disgusting, free of the feeling of being himself foul through contact with prostitutes and pimps. She had given him that, she and George, good-hearted George who was indeed a friend, preaching his happy credo of light acceptance, yet uneasy and defraught himself. The world, suddenly, here with these two, among all these difficult, extraordinary people,

became clear for him, because again his kingdom, rich, filled with many things, the sea, the sky, mountains, clouds, the body of the woman, the body of the man, the rich coloring of clothes concealing, enhancing lines and curves, the touch of velvet, of grass, of tough bark, of oars, ropes and riggings, the hand, a firm bicep, a head, a breast, the smell of woods, of tar, of little blue flowers, of horses, of musty warehouses, of dank swamps, *Peau d'Espagne*, a woman's scent, the tobacco-reeking clothes of a man, became all that he had known, never had the sense to immerse in. Despite these people, maybe because of their sad desperateness, he knew that for him the world was rightly open, was a highroad of romance, of light and shade, of heat and cold, of air and sun and wind and sea, of fine foods, healthy guts in a body, and the chance of full living somewhere with someone, a thing to be chanced upon as a riot of flowering is suddenly found in a forest, a rich surprise, enchanting.

Natalie and the Duchesse both came back from their musings as he inhaled deeply, picked up his glass, gazed at each of them as for the first time and drank—"to the world, to living." Each drank to a dream, quizzically regarding his eyes, the happiness. He rose, enchanted in his youth, in his strength and lightness, kissed quickly the smooth forehead, lingeringly the old one, passed through the doors to his dream.

The Duchesse twisted her rings, looked furiously at Natalie, who eyed equally angrily, each suspecting an under-table signal. "Well, good-night" she said crisply as she swept away.

* * *

Morning brought Dick early to the stores; he got a pack, provisions, fishing-rod and tackle, other little things. By nine he was at George's, who answered the bell slowly, appeared with sleepy eyes and tousled head.

"Why, Dick," he said, "What's up? Aren't we sailing this afternoon?"

Dick smiled, gay, eager to be off, no longer caring if he hurt these people, even George, who had befriended him. But suddenly he knew he would not have had it, this eager peace, this yearning to be off, away, content alone. George had introduced the menagerie, taken him from the brothel to his bed, to intimacy with these whom he had admired from the distance, wished to be like, emulate. George, tied somehow with them, by pity, love, their trust and need, could not loose himself, was not yet free, as he at last could feel himself to be.

He caught George's arm, gripped it tightly, pressed it fondly. "I'm on my way," he said. "Of course you knew I'd go." He looked up. "I thank you, will not forget you. You have given me life, helped give

PAGANY

me life that I have wanted, never had the sense to see, given back simplicity."

George, miserable, lost, filled with nostalgia for the road, for night and stars and mountains, knew he was not wanted, no longer even slightly needed. He nodded. "I'm glad, boy. Glad for all you have at last, happy that we, our sad play at living fully, have set you free, given you what we may never have." He held his hand up as Dick started to speak. "No need to say it, we've all done some of it, each differently, myself, Natalie, the Duchesse."

Dick smiled again. "You understand the way I feel. Natalie can't. The Duchesse perhaps. Tell them I've gone."

George, too, for the moment, felt good, felt the strength of Dick, the full essence of living that had come to him, knew him awake to living, adult, complete, was suddenly sorry for himself, the ten years between them he had mucked so badly, becoming sorrily cultivated, wasted so prodigiously; he, still searching, none too sure of finding.

He watched Dick down the hill, his easy stride, the high-flung head, the strong young back, the slim rounded buttocks, the complete man, essential, real, in the world and of it. He wondered how to tell Natalie, the Duchesse, scratched his head, went in to bed.



RETURN FROM THE SLEEPER

David Cornel DeJong

I am he that comes from the turnstile
Laughing together, a laugh at my muscles,
My sinews, my whispers—these leveled
The granite over her sleep, the summer sleep
With bee heads blind in pollen yellow,
The simple tipping of the grass,
The cows, the still knees bent together.
And she lies, thinned in sleep,
Within the lizard—sunny weather.

I have lined my body so, hand on
Her hand, lips on her fuller lip,
A prophet's gesture, storms beneath

PAGANY

The ribs that crescent on the heart,
The ancient thirst for eyelid flutter
Alight; but I have leveled granite
On deeper death—this sleep
In soft antennaed petal shutting,
In grass on grass with sheep and sheep.

I come, laughing together, with sinews
Impotent in scudding haste, in wind vane
Weather—laughing wide, together.



BROTHER TO THE HAPPY

Tess Slesinger

The body becomes a sieve through which life streams and no one no vessel to catch it to take hold and give it form to receive it as a present for no one wanted it—this is what it is to be old, to be old she thought, and petty things grow paramount in the brain: sugar the celery because Gladys and damned if I'll be Grandma to a book of poems too nasty to read in the bath-tub—and never a word to a soul for whom could you tell it to anyway what was he these days and for how many years past, oh Lord! but an old man who if you woke him in the night had no teeth in his head.

Why where's Dennis where's Dennis she cried out when her daughter oh what a tall clean lovely girl came into the room so different from when with a school-bag. Yes where's the boyfriend where's the boyfriend he quavered too but meaning it so stupid that she turned on him Oh put in your teeth old man she said impatiently and had to turn it into a joke because of that lovely clean girl who was and couldn't help it, his daughter

Oh gosh Sally said, didn't I tell you I thought we told you

Don't tell me he's not—she said and could feel the blood stifling in her temples like when one of her flushes

There's a poetry meeting tonight, gosh mother I'm sorry I thought we told you, I surely thought

Resentful woman that she was and hating it bitterly when her son-inlaw relegated her to "Grandma" producing nothing but a book of poems to justify the stigma what does she do but cry out in a voice that rang

PAGANY

sharp and false as a counterfeit coin But what a shame, a shame! and here I am with his favorite his very favorite—for a coward she was too afraid to face him without his very favorite

The boyfriend won't be here you say, the boyfriend won't be here said the old man and he could leave his teeth out for all of her the poor old man

If it isn't my bitch of a sister he cried bounding into the room and no eyes for anyone but her, a big clean fine-looking man only Gladys was letting him get fat, and there they stood in the middle of the room wrestling pinching sniffing made for each other that brother and sister where could they have found mates so fitting and God knows they never had. My bitch of a sister he cried, and where's the *dichter* he said coolly while his nose thrust forward like a rodent's made little glances as if he would smell out Dennis from his hiding-place, and the mother watched how his eager face smirking made circles around his sister's neck while she stood there grim like a tree fighting him fighting didn't she know she wanted him the prim prudish tall clean lovely young thing with the shape of her face exactly like his

Don't you see your mother bad boy don't you see your mother? she cried merrily oh these scenes between brother and sister they made you drunk made you merry. If it isn't my Old Lady he said and bounding over picked her up and kissed her with loud smacking sounds over the cheeks and mouth but it was different it was different, you can't fool me my boy. And your father . . . My liege, he bowed, distaste in his mouth for the old man who was like a shrivelled cocoanut like a dried up monkey and the old man was he ashamed did he feel obscene that something so big had come out of him away back in his young days the old man grinned and turned away his head

And what do you think, he said, your rival, he said to his sister, isn't coming, Gladys isn't coming. Have you been a good enough Old Lady, he said to his mother, all week to deserve such luck?

Oh I'm sorry, oh why not, she said and genuinely sorry almost for an absent Gladys was a sweet thing a simple thing and it is highly probable that sugaring celery is the very best thing you can do with it and she would like to tell Gladys—Oh why isn't she coming I'm so sorry

What, what? they all cried as the old man toothless and mouthless gesticulated and mumbled some joke getting the best of him in his old age, oh dear oh dear what life was full of jokes that can't be beat, who would have thought who would have thought eh, eh, that's a good one . . .

PAGANY

What is it Pop? can't you spit it out? would the boy never forgive his Pop for being old

Open your mouth old man, she said sharply, speak plainly for heaven's sake.

I only said I only said it's so funny what's-her-name isn't coming and the boyfriend ain't coming and I only said how funny because

(Really isn't the dichter coming?)

And what's funny about that you silly old

I only said how funny because that means it means that just the family only the family

As if Gladys and Dennis weren't in the family you old fool more in it that you or I you stupid

Hot dog he shouted to his sister, do you mean he really isn't coming you mean, hot dog he shouted, Pop's right, it's the old family circle without any chaperones

And half-way across the room to his sister he stopped he stopped short and she stood there like a young maiden with morals

Supper, supper, she cried for she could feel that something was wrong now the old man with his silliness perhaps

Do you remember he said how I used to twist your thumb to make you walk faster to school? How he was looking at her at his sister as if please forgive me but after all

Eh what kids you were, what kids you were mumbled the old man

Do you remember how I sneaked you into the boys' lab because you wanted to see standing-up toilets

Into the what, into the what murmured the old man not daring to believe could something so rich so tremendous! right here in his own family, Wild Indians they were

Do you remember how I let you carry my heaviest books and made you think it a special honor oh you little dumb-bell what a little dumb-bell you were

Dennis has the most amusing that is they are also heart-breaking

Do you remember I told you that every man you saw on the street had done it even the tailor, not *Gerald* you said not my own *cousin!* and I said yes even *Gerald* everybody but your wonderful big brother

Poor Dennis—she was speaking to her mother with eyebrows raised please listen, please listen,—they sent him to boardingschool when he was so young poor dear and he wasn't the type oh he wasn't the type at all

Oh the hell with Dennis tonight he cried smirking

Tell us, tell us Sally, she said, oh oh once a motherinlaw always a

PAGANY

maybe he wasn't here the poet but she could feel his accusing eyes just the same You're not paying enough attention to me—tell us, tell us

You see it was a very religious place

and for that I have to pay my daughter has to pay, just because his mother didn't want him around the house and sent him off to a religious place and now we have to pay he has to be a poet

Oh it was awfully strict and he must have been such a pathetic adorable little boy

For Christ's sake he threw at his sister, can't he outgrow it, can't you leave him home this once now we're all together again

I should say, I should say so, just like the olden times, the old man cackled with pride in the phrase

Shut up old man with your nonsense she cried and looked anxious at her daughter sitting there so stiff what's the matter with you little girl don't you like it any more when your brother

Did the boy get married first mamma, the old man asked, I always forget, did the boy

Your daughter, he said pointing at his sister, she was the one, she did it

But how is Gladys's *teaching*, Sally cried as much as to say oh that Gladys oh that teaching is there anything interests me so much? like a teacher herself raising her eyebrows for you must remember you must remember

Good Lord, I suppose she I suppose it's

Sa-ay, sa-ay, I can remember you two the old man was mumbling sly and shy, bits of celery hanging down out of his mouth like a dog he had grown like a toothless old dog, but it was too much for him suddenly what was he but an old man wrinkled dry like a raisin like an old woman, Eh what a pair you were

Of course her curriculum must be pretty well confined but still I thought, Dennis and I thought, Sally said oh so sprightly oh so interested and alive oh so exact in how she clipped out her words blinked her eyes why my dear you can't imagine how Dennis (the dear boy) how we just put our heads together and as for Gladys a sister a dear sister dear old Gladys

Regular wild Indians, wild Indians I used to call you

Shut up old man, who cares about that now, she said bitterly, they've grown up you fool can't you see, they've got husbands and wives of their own now

I'm sorry, I'm sorry the old man mumbled

PAGANY

Oh what the hell Pop, where's your spirit, he cried but his own spirit was dead dead in his eyes and he kept them down on his plate and wouldn't look again at his sister so smug so upright so married so happily married at the other end of the table from him.

Well mother he said, and he looked forty and dull the kind of man you wouldn't believe being a mother to, well mother, and how do you like the quiet family party for a change eh

Why it's nice, it's nice, she purred oh stupid stupid do they think I'm blind do they think I'm dumb quiet family party my eye, more like a dynamite party I'd call it—only of course I miss the others they're part of the family too just as much every bit as dear

Used to ride horseback, horseback on the parlor floor brought out the old man noble, emphatic, as though he sensed denial in the air as though he would face them with the facts face them with the facts for the fine clear moment that he remembered them

My father is pleased to serve us word-salad said the son after a moment in which they had let the facts fall into their plates and watched them lie there and tried to stir them into the pudding

Your father is growing old, she said feeling a dignity like a flowing of new life in her veins for she too like the old man could face for a moment his facts, and you must not

My little girl is busy missing Dennis, she said kindly, and what hate flashed at her out of her daughter's eyes as her face a guilty red looks down again at her plate.

And what makes my *brother* so quiet said Sally in her smarty-thought-he'd-have-a-party voice

Why nothing, he answered her politely, the rejected the hurt the aging brother, brother to the happily married

Like the olden times, the olden times, ah yes wild Indians, that was a good one, a good one—the old man let fall to nobody for he had retired decently into his old man's world

If you'll excuse me, the son said rising

Take care of yourself, sport, he said clapping the old man on the shoulder, you're the only Old Man we've got, remember sir! Be good to yourself mother—, I must run off I'm sorry I promised to call for Gladys—seven years married and the name still like an unexpected sour apple in his mouth

Regards won't you, he said politely to his sister, to your to Dennis.

Where is he going, where is he going asked the old man coming bewildered out of his world

PAGANY

Leave him alone, he must call for his wife

He should bring her back here, tell him he should bring her back

Why I'm afraid Pop

Of course, of course, she soothed him, he doesn't know what he's talking about, run along my son and give her my love son tell her how sorry we were how sorry we all were

Tell her, Sally began, I want to speak to her about

Well toodle-oo, he said turning at the door and whose fault was it that his eyes were a second too slow to meet his sister's.

So they sat there as though it were a stadium which crowds of people had just emptied and the stillness and the loneliness sat on their heads while the hour uncoiled itself out of a gigantic spool and she thought how her own aging body was the personal medium for time

Well daughter

Well mother

Like flies they drifted caught beyond struggling in the heavy syrup of time

How is Dennis's work Sally?

Wild Indians the old man breathed and she thought how time made an exception for him he was no fly he hopped like a bird into the past if he wanted to and for this reason he was no longer alive

He has a new poem he thinks you will love he said, Grandma will love this one.

Why the dear, did he really say that

Flies caught with a leg each in the thickness of time

Damn it mother why do you never believe when I say something nice about Dennis? of course he said it, he definitely said when he gave it to me to read. Here's one Grandma will love—and why you can't believe me.

The darling, she said, he really said that eh

Oh my poor, she said suddenly to the old man seeing with pain how he was living himself twenty years back, how bad your teeth must feel, take them out my dear, let mamma clean them for you. Your father, she said to her daughter, is growing old, old.



PAGANY

SIX POEMS

Norman Macleod

YOUNG MANHOOD IN IDAHO

Every day we lay in the glare of the water
Upon the sand until the members of our bodies
Were erect with sunlight and our skin
Was tan as the desert and our eyes were brown
Enough for darkness and then we dried
Ourselves with wind and fastened our clothes
Around us and walked with the mood of clouds
Back to the ranches to milk the cows
And eat our bread and honey. At night
The soft coverlet of evening was soft
As any down beneath our touch. We left the ranches
And wandered along the country roads
Where the crickets made music along the ponds
To the lights of the village.
The drugstores were carnivals of wonder
And soda pops and candy were beneficent
Proofs of paradise. The wenches from the farms
Walked down the pavements with a swing
Like cattle bunched to the action of
Flies and their tails swinging.
The rumps of the maidens were ample
And their breasts were full as a pail of milk.
Their lips were thick and their teeth white
And they laughed and giggled at nothing.
We would follow them to the schoolhouse
Where all was quiet and the yards were ridged
With bushes and hollows where we all would sit
Until we had made our selections and then
We would segregate and follow life
Each after his own fashion.
At midnight we returned along the ruts
Of the country roads and stumbled in darkness.
At home the smell of the hay and the blankets
Was peace like the sun for our bodies.

PAGANY

VACATION BOYS ABOVE ODGEN

We spent our vacation in stone cabins in the canyon
Above Ogden. It was quiet there with the sunlight:
The mountains leaned to the north and south and the sun
Would stream from morning to sunset, the clouds
Like nettles of white in the sky and soft for the air.
We breathed comfortably in the altitude of summer
And the rocky stream was bridged with cottonwoods
And bridges of granite. The cliffs above us were rigid
With perilous tension and we would scale the heights
But seldom: it was pendulous in air that we saw
The cabins, once we had wound our way to the top.
Sometimes we stepped from boulders above the valley
And were held with terror to the ligaments of stone,
Our hands clutching wildly to shrubbery and roots
Of stupendous pine. When we came down to the canyon
We kept the smell of the free wind in our lungs
And were refreshed with evening. At night we would go
To the open air dance pavilion. Our hands were
Encircled with friendship (we were cool in white
And considered the immaculate aspect of our
Countenances clean.) There we met girls from many cities
And one we all remembered: her face was a scarlet
Spider lily and she feathered the grass with screams.

THE REAPING OF OATS

The oats were a silver greeness in the upland pasture,
High as the chest of a grey stallion that forded
The river of oats, his mane the flying spray from the prow
Of his head in the water of greeness.
The gophers had holed in the earth and the oats
Were a forest of reeds around them. We set traps
For badgers and harnessed the mares for the harvest.
After mowing the grain we would sit beneath
Chokecherry bushes and eat our lunch in the shadows.
The perspiration was a rain of hale heartiness
From our foreheads and the breeze was an electric fan
Cooled by the pressure of higher currents.

PAGANY

It was soon that we had the shocks set like fountains
Of green springs on the stubble. It was growing
Near sunset. We unharnessed the mares and drove down
To the barnyard. They were fed and we washed our brows
In the running stream from the orchards. The farmhouse
Was warm with the yellow light from the windows
And after the boys had brought in the milk, we poured it
Through separators. Our dinner was a sustained
Glow for our bodies and we lolled at the table
With the smoke of tobacco curling below the pineboard
Ceiling. We thought of the day and tomorrow.

HUCKLEBERRY CAMP

We went camping in huckleberry time, our wagons
Jolting blue in out of the way forests. The high
Pines were stately pillars in the altitude
Of the mountains. The trails were a seepage
Of melting snow and the flowers put back the time
Of the year on the snowline. High prairies
Of beargrass were a pasture for the caravans
Of sheep, and collies were the rivals of wolves
And coyotes. Sometimes we found a stray sheep
Foundered in the gulley and we would roast it
By evening, and camp by the smell of its flesh
Singed by the fire. At dawn we would be up
And away with coffee within us. No breakfast
Could taste 'as good as it did in the mountains.
Our speech would be clear as the sparkle of frost
And related to our age and the hour.
We came to know each other as the deer
And remained unfrightened. The nights were cold
With the aromatic cedar of boughs beneath us
And we tasted the needles of pines to clean
Our teeth and we boiled like a sweatbath
In the hot water mineral springs of the hills.

EARLY WALK TO THE VALLEY

We often walked from the mountain farms
Down to the valley. Along the road were springs

PAGANY

As cold as the hour before dawning.
The dew on the wilderness of roses
Was a lavender for the air and syringas
Were white breasted birds in the early silence.
The isolation of our hearts receded
As the heights were lowered to the valley.
The raspberry bushes grew to the deepened
Color of morning. We walked and there were
No thoughts with us: we were redolent
Of undergrowth from limbs of foliage
By the roadside. We sometimes quickened
Our steps to relieve the shadows. Beyond
The curves of the road we would often find
A rattlesnake pronging the air before us.
We could sidestep delicately as any mare
And leave danger around us. The sunlight
Would burst like a morning glory
As we stepped from the mountains to level soil.

HOME CORRAL

The valleys were good for the horses to lay down
Their bodies, the grass cool and tall
As the limitations of their sight, and the moisture
And fragrance of growth. It is a good thing
To remember the feel of the saddle
On long journeys across the mountains
And how the horizon was a glorification of distance
From the mountain tops. But the valleys
Are the good way home and the cabins and coulees
Hide out the heart and the corrals fence
The home pasture where the cows are healthful
With no desires and the hay is a substitute
For fire. Here we can have smoke of cedar
On our hearths that our thoughts may roam.
It is better thus than that we should tire
And never find what we are seeking.
We are pioneers in the strength of our youth
And then we bed like the horses and rest
With our nostrils and lungs expanded
Recuperating memories and defeats.

It is good to have been noble and realize
The futility of sacrifice. We have come a long
Ways and we have found it good to be back.



NEW YORK SLEEPWALKING

Robert McAlmon

Brooklyn bridge. Skyscrapers across the Hudson. Boats and barges. In the offing New York Harbor. New York in outline from the sea's sculptural unity. Skyscrapers, obelisks, needle slender. Night descending upon Wall Street. Foghorns bellowing forlornly. Gunmen. Hell's kitchen.

Across the river lights came on in patches throughout the city section. Grant stood, liking the view from the Columbia Heights room. Why did Lederlin talk so much and write so many frantic letters, bothered about grocers and tradesmen who at no time have worried about art? "Only the dead are appreciated today." "In Italy the peasants recite Dante as they sing at their work!" Rot, in Italy they worship d'Annunzio; and Mussolini.

There was a knock at the door and Remo Rosen came in. Remo was quiet. "What's on your mind?" Grant asked. Remo was studying to be a second mate at sea. Possibly his quietness was morose. Grant did not know how much in Remo was intense Scandinavian gloom.

"Nobody else in?" Remo asked.

"No, have a seat. How are things?"

"I may pass my exams if Alex stays out of my room so I can study."

"He's an unexercised Newfoundland pup that can't be alone for five minutes. Study in my room if you like. Alexis has decided lately that I'm a cold-blooded snob because I don't like every boob he drags along. Hell, I can't stand mobs collected together just any way, unless I'm drunk, and drink costs money."

"Are you broke?"

"Almost. A check's due to arrive though."

"There's a room across the street to let. Do you want to take it with me? It's cheap, and Alexis doesn't like me," Remo said.

"Let's take it. To hell with Alexis. He's too on the make, meeting great people, and slapping everybody on the back. I can't stand his hearty,

swell-guy, 'you-intellectuals' patronizing. He's not so sane and healthy with balance. And now he's turned suspicious that I'm not loyal to him. The damned fool. I never pretended to like him."

Soon Remo and Grant were back, having taken the room across the way with the assurance that they'd move in next day. "If you want to go overtown I can lend you money," Remo suggested.

"No, I want to read. Stick in here and study and I'll quiz you later if you want."

"Don't do it you you're busy, but maybe you'll help me pick a present for that girl on Long Island. You got better ideas than I have."

"Tomorrow," Grant agreed. "You took her dancing last night, didn't you?"

"Yes, but I want to get her a present. She says she can't go dancing often. Her folks think she's too young."

"Don't worry over that. You've fallen pretty hard," Grant said. He knew the Long Island girl thought Remo too stolid. She didn't like his huge frame, and his shyness, or his red, rough hands. "I'll help select her a present."

They buried themselves in books. Grant was not at ease. Perhaps Remo wanted to talk and didn't know how to unburden himself. He was not so simple and lumpish as Alexis sarcastically suggested, ashamed that his brother should want to be a sea man. Remo didn't give the feeling that he would knock things over with his hulk so much as Alexis did, and Grant observed that he wrote with no awkwardness. His sympathies were all with Remo in the antagonism between the two Rosen brothers. Alexis assumed too great a manner because he had a position as a newspaper cartoonist, but that did not make him less obtuse.

"Mother's in a temper again," Remo said finally.

"What is it this time?"

"Dad and Alexis both know," Remo halted, "she's lived with old man Vorhees for ten years, since she left dad. She's angry that we know. She hasn't any time for me anyway. It's only Alexis she thinks a credit to her."

"Don't let it disturb you, Remo. He'll have rocky times later, I bet. He isn't developing, and his sort of thing won't be in demand for any long period."

It was past midnight when Alexis broke into the room swaggering and full of enthusiasm for the well known people he had been meeting. "Hey, beau, I met Bert William tonight. I say, I do say, there am a man. Everybody loves Bert, ah said, everybuddy loves Bert," Alexis was vociferous.

PAGANY

ferous in his attempt to imitate a dialect. He stuttered, repeated, re-attempted his gestures and accent imitations. "Hello—hell-oh—Bert sez to everybuddy, ev-er-y-buddie, ah sez—and no one coming to Bert's table changed Bert. So nice and mild, and not to be taken in by any-buddy. And when be sang,

The moon shines on the old distillery,
so stillily,

ah say, beau, you ought to seen Bert."

Grant wanted Alexis out of the room. It was too much. Alexis might stay for over an hour attempting to imitate Bert Williams, or trying to remember exactly what Al Jolson had said. He was always practicing the technique of his oft-repeated stories and imitations. How many times had he told each joke he knew? And always stutteringly, posturing, striking a listener's arm to demand attention. Grant, not wanting to listen, went on reading.

"Oh, by the way, Grant," Alexis said, noticing Grant's coldness, and assuming nochalance, "Harrison Lloyd is upset about you. You and that Sheila person. I don't want to interfere, but after all, she is a bit of—she likes intrigue. She told Harrison something you said of him."

"What of it?" Grant answered. "Perhaps she does like intrigue. It doesn't matter what she told Harrison, and chatter carried back and forth by her, or you, is damned boring. It's sad that Harrison is upset, but he depresses me with his heavy love for the masses. Otherwise I have nothing against him, but that doesn't make him interesting either."

"Ah, ha, ha," Alexis said, forcing a chuckle, "you like to be difficult I say, Grant."

"I don't need to put much effort into it, Alex. If I'm difficult perhaps it is to avoid things I don't want."

"Hah, ha, ha, you are a sour old grouch," Alexis said, walking about heavily.

"Oh, can it, Alex," Grant said impatiently. "Remo and I are both damned near broke, and if I were not I would not have gone to the Follies to see or hear Jolson or Bert Williams, and naturally I don't want your version of them. Can't a man enjoy the privacy of his own room."

"Hell, I oughtn't to come in and tell you about the show when you couldn't be there," Alexis said largely. "I'll tell you. I'll take the lot of us to a feed tomorrow and we'll go somewhere. You ain't so interested in these theatrical people as I got to be. It's good for me to know them. A man needs all the friends he can get, because none of us knows when

PAGANY

we'll have a run of hard luck." Grant softened somewhat in his distaste for Alexis, who was generous in his impulses. He didn't think enough to realize how eternally on the make he was, and he did know every kind of person. Alexis went out of the room soon.

"I'm glad we move tomorrow," Remo said. "Alexis will not like it though."

"No, but he won't consider that somebody may have different tastes than his own. He means well, if he isn't having a streak of hard luck, then he suspects that everybody is wronging him. I won't pretend to feel any affection for him."

"It was he who told Harrison something your girl said you had said about him."

"I know. What rot! We were talking about people who are always late for appointments and Harrison was mentioned. Somebody said, 'but Harrison never comes'. I brightly said that was what I understood and Alexis had to explain the joke ten times to everybody. It's too bad Harrison heard about it, but hell, I can't explain that sort of remark to him. He would wonder why I said it even as a quick joke."

"Alexis doesn't like Sheila anyway," Remo said. "She doesn't pay enough attention to him so he thinks she is a snob."

"Alexis is a damned bore, and by Jesus I'd tell him so some night if he kept coming into my room. I bet that he won't speak to me though when he finds that we've moved across the street."

New York. The subway. All of long, narrow, New York, Sunday quiet. Down the long stairs from Woolworth's tower, in a flying, falling, dream, New York a procession, Broadway, the center, New York growing less New York and widening into the country. Through the ghetto, China Town, Negro Harlem, New York. The afternoon crowds were assembling in lines in front of moving picture cathedrals. The public works hard to have money to pay people who work hard to entertain them; not much in themselves. They need entertainment, something gay, light, comic, none of this highbrow, heavy, sobstuff. We see enough of that in life, heaven knows, and when we go to the theatre we want something to laugh at. What's the use of all those sordid details? Because machinery is the mongol horde of the generation, sweeping Saracenic massacre of nerves. Black, marble-shining, sensuality. Don't tone down the niggers. Spin them hips, revolve 'em fast. The East is becoming slowly modernized. Soon they will keep the flies away from babies' eyes. There, the past, a tomb. Beautiful sculpturing, architecture, mosques,

PAGANY

and tangled, labyrinthine streets, fakirs, booths, a motley fatalistic horde.

The tubes were packed, black, dampish, musty, slimy cool, with humid human heat circulating. Halitosis, eat puffed rice, try arsenic if you want to dope. John, you didn't say a word all evening. Get Elbert Hubbard's notebook and mesmerize your audience with correspondence French music learned overnight in a garret.

Into the dewy, jewy cubes, blackly through humidity shot through tubes, touching people, smothered, and landed at fourteenth street.

Grant was remembering Remo. It was but three months back they had roomed together without imposing on each other's privacy. Remo had been fine in his quietness, and great in the way he departed leaving ten dollars in an envelope, knowing that Grant was broke. He had known Remo was intuitive, but groping. He had sensed brooding despair under Remo's quietness, but why had he killed himself? Taken a gun, and wandered about the docks at Stockholm to finally shoot himself at the end of a pier. Of course, why not, if he didn't like life? But no debt should have been the reason. That wasn't it though. Had he been brooding about suicide in New York if anybody had questioned him deeply enough? It had been hard getting at Remo, beneath his silent brooding, come of race, of dislike of family, of strange environment, and of a childhood amongst bitter, combative, relatives. The whole period of life at Columbia Heights recalled itself vaguely to Grant.

Going down eighth street Grant encountered Sheila. She looked sal-low and weary, done in by having stuck the summer in New York. "Why haven't you been around, or you might have written me?" she said. "It's been two months, and I do think that if any two people in New York should see each other, it is you and I."

"Why, because we're both self-tormentors and can tear anything into nothing with our nerves," Grant asked. "I've been to Norfolk on a lumber barge. Nearly jerked my arms out of their pits trying to steer the loaded barge in a rough sea, coming back. I feel healthier though, because of the exercise."

"You might have written."

"Have dinner with me tonight. I wasn't feeling newsy."

"Yes, come and get me. Really, I didn't meet people for a while just to see you oftener."

Grant laughed skeptically. "Yes, we get on all right together, but it would be awful if we slumped on each other, when we both know how easy it is to like so many people."

"You're impossible," Sheila laughed. "I did miss you."

"But you weren't lonely, Sheila. How well we understand each other. See you tonight."

Going down Fifth Avenue Grant encountered Vernon Townsend and fell into step with him. Vaguely Grant was aware that Townsend was depressed. Vaguely he saw that diminutive, round-shouldered, caved-in Townsend was appealing and comic in his grim resolve to be hard-boiled.

"I haven't seen you in a hell of a time," Townsend said.

"I've been on numerous jobs, secretarial, as a hotel clerk, on a barge, and trying to sell insurance. Now I'm going steerage to Europe."

"Why?"

"Rats, I don't like New York, and I can't go back, anywhere. The next step is Europe. I can't be any harder up there than I have been in New York."

"It takes money to get there."

"I know. I've borrowed some. The idea of cattle-boating over doesn't strike me romantically as it would have in early childhood."

"I've been canned off my job on the hardware journal," Townsend said, "and the wife's going to have a baby? Wasn't I a damned fool to get married."

"That's hell. Let's do some drinking tonight. I have a dinner appointment, but you can come up to my friend's studio after. She probably has liquor or can get it. If she can't I'll even use part of my hard-earned sixty bucks for a bottle of booze." Grant wondered if Sheila would be rude to Townsend, as she could be to people she thought nobodies. He didn't want that. Townsend was battered enough. Soon he realized that he took too long a stride for Townsend who peered near-sightedly into the traffic as they crossed a crowded street. He walked slower feeling protective and vain because, medium-sized himself, he towered over Townsend.

"If you're collecting people for a party I might get Allenson," Townsend suggested. Grant was sharp with suspicion.

"Is that the Jew guy who wanted to psychoanalyze me one night? He asked me to walk when I was drunk to see how my knees wobbled."

"He's not bad when you know him."

"To hell with him. He needn't interpret me. Of all the sexual and human variations about that rat-toothed specimen is the prize winner. Does he think passing strangers want to confide their lives to him because he thinks he can psycholog."

"You don't like him, I take it."

PAGANY

"I can't go the reeking, inferior, soggy, mystical, unwashed, humanitarian, spiritually and financially persecuted, impudence of that bird. If he weren't so blastedly heavy in his desire to interpret a sorrowing universe his messy looks would put me off. Ask me to walk for him when I'm drunk! I'm no walking laboratory for his half-baked attempts to be Freud. That's why I want to try Europe. Maybe people there can be themselves and let other people be themselves."

"I won't bring him along then," Townsend answered. "I did hear.—"

"All right, you heard. One night he went home with a girl I'd been around with, and that was the finish. I knew she had a wandering eye, but when she accepted him that was one too many. I do not compete with people I despise."

"What did she say?"

"I wasn't damn fool enough to ask her."

Grant arrived at Sheila's later than he intended. "Are you ready to go on?" he asked.

"But I can fix up something here. I hate restaurants."

"No, I'd like to talk, but where people are about. We'll eat at some quiet place."

"You funny child," Sheila said. "Why do you act cranky?"

"I was broke, and the stunt you and Allenson pulled on Fanny Jacobson made me weary. It's damned easy for a roomful of people to decide to make another person look ridiculous. She hadn't tried to take any of your men either."

"But, Grant darling," Sheila said, hard actually, but softening her tone to a trained caress, "you are hard to understand. You thought Fanny as silly as the rest of us. I'm not dressed to dine at a quiet, and of course expensive place, and you can't afford it if you are in a temper."

"That's my problem. I want to phone somebody. If you want to dress do, and meet me at the place on 50th street. Do you mind a drinking party in your place afterwards. If you do I'll call it off."

"Of course not. You're more amiable when you're drunk too."

"Weaker, you mean. But I'll see you later."

"Run on. Be in a better mood when I join you, or I'll leave."

When Sheila came into the small restaurant she was more carefully gotten up than Grant had ever seen her. He felt distrust and embarrassment since he was dressed seedily. Her coat was smart, and when the waiter took the wrap, he saw her black gown with heavy green sleeves that fell away from her shoulder leaving her arms bare."

"Why are you cross, Grant? Why didn't you write me?"

"It's just New York, and how it affects us all."

"You're being smart. Order dinner. I know I'll get to the bottom of this, but later," Sheila said.

"Let's have it then. I wouldn't feel grimy because you took on Harrison Lloyd, and three others to my knowledge, but why make an exact appointment with me when you did not answer my knock? Later it wasn't bright of you and Allenson to exchange smiles over your story of just having arrived from the country, breathless. You might have left a note on the door. I was damn fool enough to wait outside thinking you were out, and when I came up again it was to leave you a note saying that I was going on where you could join me."

"You're being absurd," Sheila said, trying to put temper into her voice. "Why won't you be reasonable?"

"Darling, it was never me that talked of love or asked for faithfulness. But if Allenson qualifies for you, I quit. You ask why I didn't write you. Why should I write? You say men hang around your door asking for your love. I don't travel that way. Do whatever you want, but if you break appointments with me use technique or directness."

"Oh Grant, we have understood each other so well."

"Yes?"

"And you were very rude to Allenson."

"Rude? Do you think I was unconscious? He's just another yid around telling people how they are repressed. What damned good was it confusing Harrison Lloyd with the idea that he might have homo impulses. Psychoanalyst! Allenson's futile to himself and wants to make other people so to themselves. Maybe you're in the same class."

"Should I leave, Grant?"

"No, darling," Grant laughed, knowing that Sheila delighted in his fury. To interfere with her enjoyment he acted amiable. "I'll let up. It was me. I thought I knew too damned much. I had a pity lech on you. It wouldn't have operated if you didn't have looks and a mind, but I suffered over your ruined life, and dreamt dreams about you. That's over though. We can be old friends, when I'm around, but I go to Europe tomorrow."

"No, Grant. Why?"

"I asked a loan of a friend of mine in California. Ellenthorpe. I've told you of him. He has wired me five hundred bucks. I go third class to France right now."

"And we have never quarreled before, Grant. Things would be clear between us now. You and I have meant everything to each other."

"Not quite everything, Sheila. Things aren't that limited."

"You don't like me any more, and I do you. The others? I'm made that way, Grant. They mean nothing, really. It enrages me that I give in. I do want friends, and you must be my friend." Tears were in her eyes. Grant felt a wave of melancholy and tenderness. What did it matter what Sheila had been to other people? But a panicky emotion had him too. Sheila would bore him now; he didn't know how to talk to her any longer and once she had struck him as stimulating and exceptional. What had they ever talked of, and did he think her beautiful or desirable?

"Hell, Sheila, I'll be your friend. Forget my ranting. I understand and rebel that we have to understand so much. But we have to go on. Come on, let's clear out of here." They had eaten but one course but they left the restaurant. "We're both devils, Sheila. I will go to Paris. We'll probably forget each other but we needn't do it bitterly. The idea of being far away from you gets me for the moment, but we aren't for each other."

"We won't be silly," Sheila agreed. "I might go to Paris myself later. How will we feel about each other there?"

"Yes, how?"

On the way to Sheila's Grant saw Wallace Yardley and asked him to come up, later. "There is some homemade apricot brandy, she tells me. It may mean the hospital or the morgue for someone, but that's free America."

"I'm glad you asked him," Sheila said as they went on. "He is different with me, and his head is beautiful. He has that line which gets me utterly, and a lovely mouth."

"You don't waste time," Grant laughed.

"Well, you're going away. Life must be as interesting as possible. Yardley has talent and a mind."

In Sheila's apartment Grant examined the apricot brandy, pushing aside the scum on the top of it. It tasted clear and keen. When he went into the dark blue room Sheila stood by the window. In the semi-darkness she struck him as beautiful; a legendary beauty. Her dark hair, luminous skin, with her full lips red above the pillar of her neck and bosom, were framed above her black gown. Her bare arms were beautiful as she lifted them. He decided the drink had affected him. He would not act sentimental. His decision, however, was worthless, as Sheila sat herself on the lounge and said, "Grant, sit beside me."

He went, assuring himself that he would not let her think she had

him on his guard. "Damn you, Grant. I wonder if you have ever thought of me more than as a convenience."

"Why ask for glib lying, or glib truth, now?"

"I didn't have to lie to you once."

"Yes, once, and if I had been at your mercy you would be yelling now with boredom, if you consented to see me."

"Then you protected yourself against hurt?"

"That won't tease me. I'm not afraid of being afraid of emotions that I don't think matter. And if I had loved you I would have tried to have sense enough to hold you, anyway."

"I love your head, Grant. The line here," Sheila said, stroking his hair. Grant submitted, liking it combatively.

"That line doesn't mean you care about what I think or feel or am. But I'm glad if it means something to you."

"Stop intellectualizing, Grant. You are going away and I won't be about to bother you," Sheila's voice grew intimate. "Tell me about Yardley. What's he interested in, I know he distrusts me."

Grant laughed wonderingly. Yardley was Sheila's reason for caressing him now. "I don't know him well. He's hard up. I think. A nice fellow, but—sweetly romantic, gently and bravely bearing up. He paints tenderly pretty things with a mystic touch. I'm more of a barbarian than he is."

"Does he like men?"

"Maybe, but not solely, and he's afraid. He's well-bred and reserved."

"He's a new type to me. At first he didn't appeal to me and then the sensation came over me. His eyes are so utterly sweet in their blueness and his mouth is too lovely."

"He yearns to be understood, surely, Sheila. Do your best. It can't be asceticism in him that so moves your spirit."

"Nonsense, I have never been spiritual on you. You will help me though? It's good we aren't jealous of each other."

"Help you," Grant said vaguely, appalled at how quickly Sheila forgot what she didn't want to remember. "If you want him you'll get him, and both of you are grown up."

"But he likes you, and if he's shy with me he'll talk to you most of the evening."

"I'll bring him over to you, and evaporate."

"Anyway, it won't make any difference between us, will it, Grant?"

PAGANY

You won't think to write me letters, but we will be friends if I come to Paris, won't we?"

"Yes, of course," Grant answered, his voice seeming far away. The liquor made him half intent, he told himself. He tried not to feel dismay. There was no use of a mawkish feeling that he cared what Sheila did. She was merely associated with his conception of New York, and the idea of going away from any place made him melancholy until the break was made.

Grant awoke, his head throbbing with a nausea of alcohol fever. The apricot brandy of the night before had been poison. He took the letter his landlady handed him and opened it carelessly. He could sail this night at midnight for France, third class. Townsend had been sober and remembered to get him a ticket then.

Climbing out of bed he was sick and felt disgust too much to permit any emotion of regret within him. Why had Sheila tried to get him to stay with her and Yardley last night? But it wasn't his business to question what she did now? Only she might have let things end nicely, or had she wanted to taunt him? He got up and went down the street to have coffee. He felt nostalgic about New York and America and wondered if France would make him more contented. Life is no more one place than it is another. It had always been full when he felt it so, and monotonous and flat when he felt it that way.

"Grant, I am glad I found you," Sheila said, coming into the restaurant. "Your landlady said you might be here, and that Townsend had got you a ticket. You aren't leaving tonight? So soon. You left the party last night disgusted at me. I did want a last talk, if we never see each other again, and when you are sober."

As Grant heard Sheila's voice he seemed to draw himself back to the scene from a panorama of places: the Dakotas and their sweep of prairies; lower California, irrigation ditches and cotton fields; the upper woods of Minnesota with hunting season on; Louisville in war time. Camp Taylor the day of the armistice.

"Yes, I was filthy drunk. Don't mind what I said. I kept Yardley talking to me and he thought you and I were intimate. He wouldn't intrude. I hope I didn't spoil things for you."

"Forget him, Grant. He doesn't matter. He said he would call, anyway. But I want to see you off on the boat."

"All right. Hell, Sheila, aren't human relationships damn-foolishness,

PAGANY

and who invented morality? We want what we want and might as well not be hypocrites."

"Come up to my room if your baggage is ready."

"It's only a suitcase full. We'll have a last shot of brandy."

Sheila in her room sat thrumming scales on the piano. "I'll miss you, Grant. It's foolish to talk about it, but I'll miss you."

"Not after I'm gone. Going away and partings make us all melancholy. Come to Paris though later. Why not?"

"Oh Grant, if the world were made up of people who are beautiful, or amusing. How can one keep hopeful enough to venture? Why can't we have more of what we want, or want less? Where is the brandy? Get it."

"Sure, a drink will cheer us up. But gosh, Sheila, don't take a farewell forever attitude. Things go on. We can't be like people who can't stay together, and who can't stay apart, and who fight each other constantly. I hate that sort of thing."

"I'll see what happens inside me," Sheila said apathetically.

Grant stood by the piano. Sheila now was playing something of Chopin's that tinkled and fell with a series of clinks, glass autumn leaves falling on thin brittle ice. He ought to say something to leave a warming impression on Sheila's mind. He felt her immeasurably faraway and dismally distant, within herself. The blue room was closing in, stuffily. Outside the air was clear and invigorating.

A deep melancholy was a fog in Grant's lungs and the pit of his stomach. He tried with his mind to ignore it, to specify it as world nostalgia, a passing mood, one of life's moments of nausea. Sheila was no answer for him; New York was no answer; the United States was no answer; France, he felt now would be no answer. The world, and life was not at moments such as this a fulfilling answer.

"Isn't there a way to drug ourselves into a state of unremittant resignation. We neither of us have sufficient sense of humor. I wish now you were coming with me, but we'd tantalize each other and separate again, surely. It's best now, I suppose."

"As if what is best was ever a help," Sheila said, laughing with faint irony. "But we have understood each other better than either of us understand many others, sympathetically."

It was ten o'clock night when Grant boarded his ship. Sheila did not want to stay in the crowds bidding a forlorn farewell. Grant watched her from the deck as she departed, slowly. She was in a black suit and

PAGANY

looked small and dismal. Why must she? Sheila had wit and energy and imagination. What could he do about her? Why did she linger? He waved goodbye to her as she turned.

"It will be marvelous in Paris when you arrive. In the springtime, through the gardens at Versailles, it is wonderful."

"Yes," Grant called back, thinking to himself, "there is always spring to consider, always a new year, always the possibility of change." Nevertheless the world was constrictively small about him, and all beyonds seemed mere illusions.

"Grant Urquhart, you here!" he heard, and turned to find Margaret Alden facing him.

"Are you sailing on this ship?"

Grant's heart became light with a joy. Margaret was so essentially a good comrade. For a flickering moment he thought of Sheila and New York, but only to wonder at how quickly his mood could change within him. Not lonely, not facing an arrival utterly alone in a new country he felt strong and free and for now, happy.

"Yes," Margaret answered. "I'm going to Paris to study art, as they say. That is, dad agrees I need the broadening influence of Europe so as not to get into some other idiotic marriage." She was dry and droll. As she stood she rubbed dust off her left shoe on her right stocking, an old habit of hers. "Come on to my cabin. I have a bottle of gin. We need a drink to start with."

"I'm third class, but hell, I'll spend my time first class with you, Marj. Lead on to the drink."

"It's grand that you're on board. I felt seedy, but hell, Grant, when you and I hit Paris if we don't find out what's what, there is no such thing. Who was the girl bidding you goodbye? You looked sick. Is she your sweetie?"

"No, Marj. I like her. I felt lonely. So did she, but she'll forget, and so will I. We are not of the world's monogamously faithful. Damn it, we both want people and more people and continual variety. It's best, too. I'd hate to grow old regretting a million things I'd never seen or experienced or even tried for. Life has to be interesting. I won't submit to it not being."

"You big bum," Margaret smiled. "Take it calm, old boy. I know how you feel about the lady, but you actually spoke truth. You'll forget her. Come on and drink. I'm your brother and we aren't romantic, together. Hell, Grant, I left my heart behind me too. That's why dad

PAGANY

talked me into this trip, but I'll forget now too. Who is either of those people? They're only people."

"You're right Marj. To hell with the torments of love. Thank God you and I are only fond of each other. We can curse each other out without concealed motives. Come on to your cabin. I hope you have enough gin for us to get blotto on." Grant took Margaret's arm affectionately and they swang down the deck together, carefree and collegiate.

"We're born with campus souls, Grant. They tell me the open air cafes will be going strong by now in Paris. That's our rate. We're bums. I say, old pal," Margaret answered as she caught Grant's hand and pressed it with a fellowship squeeze. "It's good to have you here."

As they started down the stairs Grant caught her and kissed her. "You good-for-nothing scatterbrained eternal flapper, I love you, and that don't mean ooze. You're my friend, and by god, if you get into any messes in Paris I'll paddle your young behind."



THREE POEMS

Carl Rakosi

FRANKFORT AND BETHLEHEM

8/10

This postcard has the Christmas
spirit with its Lutheran
steeple between the hills
its cow fence and its fir tree
and a dirt farm in Thuringia.

Bright star, unto you
is born this day
a grub in the addle.

PARIS

9/8

A Bohemian idea
of a plankwalk to the sea,

PAGANY

a smoked salmon on a line,
a ball of packing twine . . .
everything in eggs and cubes
as effortless and helpless
as if waiting for a corpse
with Jockey Club and heliotrope.

Here comes the bride
with kewpie blue eyes
and a lighted brassiere.
It's a gay life.

Quote me as a humorist
with a gardenia
in my cutaway.

FOYER, THE ORPHEUM

12/10

During the water movement
of the French horns
and the lovelace of a violin
a wire from my girl. She says
"I love you but I need a deposit."
Even the ventriloquist's dummy laughed
after we combed his pretty red hair
and set him on his tricycle.

The Professor

Do you know the story of Lou?
She was a lonely little gal
with the love in her eyes
and Mr. H. H. at the ivories.
And she was happy (honest to God)
In the season of Romain effects
and synthetic American lights
she drove into a Western suburb
in a seven-bearing gull-line Suiza,
rolling her kleig eyes
like revolving doors.

PAGANY

Animal Cartoons	Whereupon the jackass full of animal gas floated blissfully into the dance of the seven veils.
Professor	Poor Lou in the climax to the Latin scene gave up the fareast of the imagination for seven rooms in Arkansas.
Lou	I have that funny feeling. It must be love.
Mr. Rakosi	Nothing so marks the copulative man as a corkscrew and a bottle opener.
Lou	Feel my pulse, please. Can it be the tropics?
Mr. Rakosi	Yes, I have a joking knowledge of many topics. It's the moonlight if you insist. Your lips are difficult to resist. Pardon me while I go to sleep.
Lou	You're so deep. Why don't you talk in English?
V's Dummy	I could almost weep. Are you my father?
Ventriloquist	That's my affair. Do you swear to uphold the constitution?

PAGANY

Dummy	On my wax banana. What the hell's going on here? I smell Pittsburgh.
Ventriloquist	It's a muscle dance it's sheet music piano tremoloing Benny Rubin Alabama chicken hop.
Porter	Can't be bothered now happy breeches. I'll be seein ya. Pick me out a nice jail.
Tom Nelson	Could you stand an old man to a cup of coffee? It's hard walking with this silver septum in my nose. Tom Nelson from the Old Royal buck and wing man.



"AND RESTED THE SEVENTH"

William Chapman

I walked down Barnes Street and said to myself that I had never in my life been so hot. I had the coat of my linen suit over my arm, the knot in my necktie was slid down so that I could keep the collar of my shirt open.

There weren't a half dozen persons in sight. It was noon and everybody in Boonesville was in church, or had gone riding off into the country. Those who didn't have cars and didn't go to church were home reading the Sunday papers and trying to keep cool.

I went into Read's drug-store for a Coca-Cola, and Jim Brackett and Sid Walker were sitting in the back of the store underneath the electric fan talking to Read. We all said hello.

"Goin' to the ball game?" Sid asked.

"I wouldn't go out to see the Giants today. Free."

"You don't want to work, then?"

"I wouldn't umpire a game for you mugs today for twenty five dollars cash."

"How much?"

"Oh, well, make it fifteen. Who's going to pitch?"

"Jim," said Sid. "He beat 'em Decoration Day. He ought to be able to do it again. Eh, Jim?" Jim nodded.

"If he doesn't get a sunstroke. Well, good luck to you guys. And leave a box score of the game and some dope at the office for me so I can write a yarn. Right."

The drink hadn't done any good. In front of Johnson's hardware store the thermometer—in the shade—said 97. There was no breeze and there were no clouds in the sky. Right out of the middle of that blue August sky the sun burned down as though the rays were coming through a big magnifying glass.

I wondered what I was doing wandering around like this. I wouldn't find anything to do.

"But, then," I said to myself, "what the hell are you doing in Boonesville?"

At Harrison Street I turned and walked up a half block and went into the police station. Sergeant Wicker, and two cops, Flaherty and Nuckols, were playing pinochle under a picture of George Washington and an electric fan. They all had their uniform coats unbuttoned and there wasn't a really clean undershirt in the lot.

Nuckols looked up. "Well, if it isn't old Snoopy Townsend! Hello, Snoop, what's up?"

"Nothing. I thought I'd drop in and see if I could dig up some graft and corruption in the police department."

"If you dig up any graft," Wicker said, "save some for me. Don't bother about any corruption."

"This would be a great day for a nice, big fire," I said. "How about letting me in this piker game. I might as well die playing pinochle at high noon on Sunday as any other way. With a lot of hick cops, too. Nuckols, how about you and me taking them on?"

We played for half an hour and big-hearted Wicker sent over to Flynn's for some bottle beer. It wasn't much as beer but it was cold and it didn't cost anything. That is, it didn't cost anything to anyone except Flynn.

PAGANY

It got hotter and hotter. We got more beer. Flaherty was taking the tops off the third set of bottles when the door opened and Freddie Morgan, the superintendent of the Methodist Sunday school, came in. He stood inside of the doorway looking at us with his big lips just flapping and a funny noise coming out of his throat. Freddie was around forty. Even in his finer moments he was not very attractive. His father, Tom Morgan, was superintendent at Black and Graham's lumber yard.

The cops started to button up their uniforms and Flaherty put the bottles on the floor.

Wicker got up. "What's the matter, Freddie?" Morgan stood there with his lips flapping and his eyes blinking as though he were trying to focus them.

"Come inside and shut the door," Wicker said.

He didn't move, so Wicker went over and shut the door and took Morgan by the arm.

"Come on and sit down and tell us all about it." Wicker was trying to be soothing. "Get Freddie a chair."

"My mother is dead!" Morgan yelled it before we could get him into a chair.

"Where is she?" Wicker asked.

"Home. Somebody killed her!"

Wicker grabbed his cap. "Nuckols, you stay here. Come, on!"

The sergeant and Flaherty took Morgan by each arm and I went along, too.

We hurried up the three blocks toward the Morgan house. Nobody said anything but Morgan was mumbling. We got to the dark green house on the corner of Bland and Harrison, climbed up the six steps onto the little front porch. We were all soaking with perspiration. I had on neither my coat nor hat.

Wicker tried the door and it opened into an entrance hall about ten feet square, from which stairs led up to the second story.

Mrs Morgan was not only dead. She was lying in the middle of the entrance hall. Her Sunday black taffeta was soaked with blood. She had been beaten into a mass of lifeless flesh and bone. Her face was unrecognizable and she was lying in such a contorted posture that it was evident most of the major bones in her body were broken.

Scattered around her lay the broken remains of furniture. And it was not difficult to guess what had happened to her.

Wicker shook Morgan and looked into his horrified face.

"Well?" he said, sharply.

PAGANY

Morgan was crying. A great sweat was pouring over his face and you wouldn't have known he was crying except for the noise he was making. Freddie pointed to a room leading off the hall. We all went through the door. There sat Tom Morgan.

"Tom! What in Christ's name is this!" Wicker bellowed it at him.

"It's all right, Mike. There wasn't anything else to do. I'll put my coat on. All right let's go."

It is the only time in my life I have ever seen Wicker look like that. He just stood and couldn't get it. Tom took him by the arm. "Come on, Mike," he said, "don't take on like that!"

Wicker finally got himself together.

"Flaherty, you stay here! I'll go down with Tom. Come on, Freddie, you come, too."

So we all started off back to the police station, nobody saying anything.

Practically no one went to the baseball game in the afternoon. Up and down Barnes Street groups of people stood around and talked because the news had spread fast. These people stood in what little shade there was and talked in low, stricken voices. A thunder storm came up about six o'clock and drove them all indoors but practically nobody in town went to bed on time that night.

Of course, I had a clean beat on the story, or at least I would have had if there had been another newspaper in the place.

One of the curious things about it all was that the murder caused a stir entirely out of proportion to Tom Morgan's status in the town. He was not a public official and he was not wealthy. He was the superintendent in Black and Graham's lumber yard. Without trying to get educational or sociological about it, I think the fact he was about as representative a soul as one could find in Boonesville was the thing that made the blow strike home so hard and put the fear of God into the hearts of his fellow townsmen. They couldn't understand how Tom Morgan, above almost anyone else in town, could have done this fearful thing. He was not stupid and he was not lazy, but early in life he achieved a small amount of money and what might have been a quiet security, and if you will pardon one last editorial observation, his well-liked prototype is to be found in every town in the country.

The rest of this story is a mixture of what everyone in Boonesville knew about the Morgans and of what was contained in the signed statement which Tom Morgan insisted on dictating that night.

He sat back in the chair smoking a huge curved briar pipe, the bowl

PAGANY

of which was almost as large as a man's fist. He was the only tranquil person in the chief's room at the police station. A large man with a lot of gray hair and a Mark Twain moustache, he talked quietly. He was so gentle and courteous that one might have thought he was showing consideration to his listeners, and not they to him.

And this is the way the story goes.

Tom Morgan was born down in Nelson county and came to Boonesville when he was sixteen because his father had died and there were two older brothers to look after the little farm and take care of his mother. And there had not been enough left over for him. He got a job working around the lumber yard of Black and Graham and he had never worked anywhere else. He was contented there and never had cause to go searching elsewhere for work.

He had a little room in Mrs Thatcher's on Elm Street and he was a quiet, shy lad. Everyone in town liked him. He worked hard at his job and got what little promotions there were to be had around the lumber yard.

Mary Willetts came to work at Mrs Thatcher's as a hired girl when he was twenty. Mary was his own age. She had worked around town since she was fifteen. And because she was an orphan the fact that at an early age she had acquired a reputation as being "loose" was somewhat condoned.

Living in the same house it was not unnatural that she and Tom got together. It was Tom's first and only affair because it was realized in time that they would have to be married.

Tom was so scared that he didn't stop to consider whether he wanted this woman for his lawful wedded wife or not. She was large but not unattractive and she knew a lot more about things than Tom did. What he wanted to avoid was a scandal, and while there was no scandal it was no secret in Boonesville what had happened. The sympathy was practically all on his side. But when it was considered how young they were there were many who said that they might make a go of it. Tom would tone down the wild side of her and perhaps everything would be all right.

But the funny thing was that Tom did not have to do any toning down. As soon as the wedding was over, even before the child was born, Mary showed another side of her character.

She became exceedingly jealous of her reputation, what clothes she wore and where they lived. Although Tom did not earn much money they had enough to have a little one-story house and it was there that Freddie was born.

PAGANY

It is doubtful whether two people ever lived together for forty years with less love. The main object in Mary's life was to prove that she was somebody. She became very moral and very religious. Or at least, she became very active in the functions of the church, and for a while this met with great approval in Boonesville. But even Boonesville saw through the charade, saw through the bitter endeavor of this woman to force herself up into whatever social prominence the active church work could offer her.

Tom went on his quiet way. Mary tried to make him go to church and for a few years he did. One Sunday morning, when she was getting ready for church and had herself and Freddie all decked out in their Sunday clothes, Tom said that he wasn't going to church. Mary got excited and came close to having convulsions. She screamed and ranted and swore but Tom just sat smoking his great pipe and reading the papers. And he didn't go to church that Sunday nor did he go again except on special occasions.

Freddie grew up to be a pale, skinny, goody-goody of a boy and won pins and things for his long and faithful record of attendance at Sunday school. His mother had complete charge of him and while Tom sometimes wished that the boy might be different he felt that there was nothing that he could do about it. In most things Tom was very passive.

He was a great joiner, and as years passed and he could afford it he joined practically every fraternal organization in town for which he was eligible. He was anchor man on the Elks bowling team and he held fairly important offices in all of the clubs. The respect shown him was considerably above his position in the community.

It might seem that superintendent of a lumber company would be a comparatively unimportant job but in Tom's instance this was not exactly true. He had been with the company almost as long as anyone, and with a little more initiative would have been one of the partners. But he had no real desire for that and as it was he made as much salary as all but two in the place. Boonesville had grown and the lumber business flourished. So, in his way, did Tom.

When they moved into the house on the corner of Bland and Harrison Tom thought that things might be different. But they weren't. They were worse. Much, much worse. Mary became more self-conscious and irritated at him. She moved along at the same pace that Boonesville had and except for what went as the very best society, she was accepted everywhere. She entertained and went to and took part in bazaars at the church. And she nagged and picked at Tom until she was hoarse.

Tom had not changed much. He liked the comfort of his Morris

PAGANY

chair. He liked to sit around with his coat off and his feet up on another chair, and smoking that awe-inspiring pipe, the ashes of which got all down his front and on the floor. And he got the Sunday papers scattered all about.

He was not without fault but early in his life he had resolved his actions into a quiet disregard for everything that went on in the house. He was stubborn about one thing and that was his belief that he had as much right as anyone else in the house to have comfort there. He didn't get in the way. He was never messy when Mary was having company. But the one thing more impressed on his mind than anything else was the fact that by working hard he had earned comfort, and he planned to have it.

Freddy, still the goody-goody at forty, had a fabulous record for having attended the Sunday school, of which he was now superintendent. He was a teller in one of the banks and lived near his mother and father with his wife and seven children.

The marriage of Tom and Mary was a miserable shamble of a thing from the start and the prospects of anything better ever coming out of it, even at a late date, were more than remote.

In relating the story of the murder Tom was clear and concise. He told it as though it were something he had read which had impressed him deeply. I give you a brief excerpt of his statement, taken from the police record:

"I was sitting in the parlor reading the Sunday paper when my wife came in and said that I should go to church with her. I told her I wouldn't. She was angry, as usual.

"Just before it was time for her to go to church she came back in the parlor and took the chair, that I had my feet on, from under my feet and put it on the other side of the room. She picked up all the papers that were on the floor around the chair and put them on the table out of my reach.

"I didn't say anything but got up and went over and got the chair and the papers and sat down to read again. She took the chair and papers away again and said that I was a lazy, good-for-nothing loafer, which is not so. I told her that she was making a fool of herself, to go off to church and leave me alone, but that made her crazy. She called me a lot of names and went to her room where she cried and yelled for nearly a half hour. I knew she was not going to church now because it was too late.

"Well, she came down stairs and you know what she done? She

PAGANY

came in and took the chair and papers away again and threw a little paper of tobacco I had on the table out of the window.

"And, Mike, then something happened to me. Something sort of clicked somewheres inside of me. I didn't get mad, but all of a sudden something seemed to shoot across my eyes like the fastest moving picture show you can imagine, because in it was my whole life. Everything just went whizzing by and the whole thing was clear. I said to myself: 'What the hell is this? and what the hell have I been doing and thinking all these years? How, in Christ's name has this all happened to me. What is this woman doing in my house? What right has she here? A child. Oh, yes, a child, that was it. That was how she got in here. But what is she doing here now?'"

"I looked up and she was standing in the middle of the room shrieking and screaming horrible things at me but I hadn't heard because I had been thinking about what I just told you.

"I got up to my feet feeling awful funny and I started toward her and she must have been scared. I know she was because she stopped yelling and started backing off into the hall.

"We got out in there and she said something to me, I don't know what. Something like 'you big loafer, you don't dare touch me.' She was still trying to bully me.

"I didn't say anything. I picked up the chair by the telephone table and hit her right square in the middle of the forehead with it. Her eyes looked funny and she reeled and I hit her again.

"But, Mike, what I am trying to make you understand is that I wasn't mad. I was not. I knew what I was doing. It was very clear to me that there had been something wrong all my life and I had to put an end to it right there. You see what I mean? A place to sit down comfortably on Sunday and rest and read the newspapers and smoke. Even God sat down on the seventh day and rested.

"Well, I broke up one chair and then I got another. Finally, when I was sure that it was finished I went back in the other room and sat down. And for the first time in my life I was happy. Nobody to say a God damn word to me. Peace, quiet and it was that way for an hour.

"Then Freddy came in and I sent him down for you."

That's all there is to the story except I forgot to say that when the four of us came up from the station-house and found the body, why, when we went into the other room, there were papers thrown from one corner of the room to the other. There were ashes all over the floor and Tom

was sitting in the Morris chair with his feet up on another and looking as contented as a frog on a lily-pad.



ELEGY ON AN EMPTY SKYSCRAPER

John Gould Fletcher

I

Against the wall of this sky
Leaden pall threaded with cardboard boxes, the pale light of the towers
Flickers unearthly still,
Long leaden streets between them:
Against the wall of this sky, the cream-white face
Of stone blocks bound in glittering steel gleams high;
Juts to the sky, and breaks
Packed huddled ranks of clouds and roofs apart
Thrusting its own horizon yet a little higher.

Beauty is spread
Here over hollow voids; beneath these walls
Clamour of traffic slides through corridors,
Long elevator-shafts shoot mountainously upwards.
Steel on the surface repels
This drizzling daylight; through the inner core
Vertical darkness spreads,
Extends its empire upwards,
Forces the tower to tremble with dull sound.

Noise of wheels tuned to wheels,
Spinning the darkness skyward,
Forcing the human darkness that should hide
The earth in fruitfulness, still bleakly upwards
In a stark affirmation,
Stone flanged to steel here to repel the daylight,
Void affirmation, since the sky goes higher
And men drift past, unseeing,
Bowed deeper by the weight of locked-in stone:—

Balancing bodies against the heat that holds
Its swift course vertically downwards;
Dragging their heavy feet into its molten pavements,
Swaying their shrinking flesh against its reverberant walls;
Noise of wheels tuned to wheels,
Bewildered with the men that move amid them;
While still the tower lurches
Upwards with its long shadow,
Flight of white ripples four-square on the sky.

Here in this drift against the wall of the sky,
Steel arms that lift,
Tackle that rattles,
Torches that sputter,
Chattering hammers that shake the empty brain,
The roar and the mutter
Of the swift elevated train
And the ships at the dockside,
The pencilled lines of the bridges
The dull green carpet of park,
The wide grey floor of the bay—
Is all this living to-day?
The fuming and looping line of the surly river to westward,
Stained by the sunset to red—
Is all this living, or dead?
Dead are twinkling lights and the sombre reflections
Of the earth-dwellers stretched heavenwards here from below?
Who is there living to know?
Only the wide hollow offices, the corridors empty of light,
Tier after tier going downwards here into night.

II

Thick pencil of shadow stretched across the street,
If I could lift
Your weight and make you write;
Or if at night
I could make move that fixed and arrogant light
That stands there emptily glaring to repeat,
In higher guise, the street lamp's signal-flight;
What against all the words that we repeat

PAGANY

In vain to-day,
What is the one word I would make you say?

"Here where once stared in dumb hope to the sky
Man by his naked blaze, and saw smoke take away
In folds of undulating grey
His prayer, not knowing walls however high:
Here wall on wall is heaped, steel thread to thread
Is riveted to extend the ever-dead:
Vain flight of shadow where the chasms cry."

And yet we pray and mind our own affairs:
And sky-signs echo back unanswered prayers.

III

Could I but strip you down,
Tear steel from steel in long peeled strips, and break
The interlocking blocks of cream-white stone,
Send them like autumn leaves swift spinning down,

Or level, near and far,
This city, spread about you greening fields,
Leave you alone, all empty as you are,
Gleaming-nerved flower that no grass reveals,

Either I'd do:
But it is vain within your walls to go,
To feel in your dead heart the beat and strain
Of hopes grown panic-smitten, to and fro
Millions of meaningless lights,
When all about you is the soundless night's.

There is wide space between
Man's topmast and his keel, and in it death
Comes without sign or sound or stir of breath.
No one shall fill that room, or take his place
In it, as stowaway or come-aboard;
Nor shall the meagre window-blind be lowered,
Nor shall the dark be levelled by a face.

IN A HALF DREAM

Solon R Barber

In a half-dream, he thought there is nothing to be decided. It is something lost, something felt, tasted, heard, known. It is as though there were a flare of memory burning coolly and dying into ashes. Those years are just flares, a flare for each, on mountain peaks, a mountain peak for each. And all Time is a vast valley in the dark with a single flare burning for a hundred years. And the men-creatures die and the flares die and the wind blows the ashes away. The wind out of the dark great valley arises and blows the ashes of centuries away.

But in the half-dream, he thought I would like to be back there again where the toy whirlwind arises and dances, toe-dances, dances like a light-grey lady on the tip of toes across the country, with the dust whirling up and held together in the dancing lady, and the dust blowing high and falling and blowing away in a billion specks like a billion little men lost and forgotten when the flares die out. And I would like to be back there, he thought, where the white sandlilies grow along the railroadtracks in the hot sun—small, cool, waxpetaled, white faces waiting in the sand, in the sunhot sand, for what? The petal, the grain and a passing train—all lost. There were mountains in that country and it was cool there and water trickled down through the moss on cliffs. One sat on a stone in the cold, blue shadow and looked down through the long ravine tangled with maple to the hot valley below there, sweeping off into mountains far to the westward. And along the valley floor, a ghost streamer of smoke where the train had passed. Too far to see the sandlilies, too far to see the grain, the petal, the stone. But the long wail came and perhaps the echo of a clanging bell.

They chased the pinto over the sand, through the drywashes, through the sage, and finally they caught him and dragged him into the corral. They put a bandanna over the pinto's eyes and some one took hold of his nose above the nostrils and squeezed the rubbery black flesh there and some one threw a blanket over the pinto's back gently and they held the nose tightly, and some one slipped a saddle on and drew the cinch tight and the pinto squealed. And he still held the pinto's nose. And then the cowhand slipped into the saddle and they tore the bandanna off and he loosed his grip on the pinto's nose and the cowhand yelled, and *shock!* And the boys left the corral gate open. And they sat on the top rail and

PAGANY

laughed at the screaming pinto and the cowhand tossing like a smokeplume in the wind. For the horse went mad, but the cowhand stuck, and they rode, rode, rode far away.

He thought, in a half-dream, there is nothing to be decided. It is all something once known, the echo of a bell, O lost. A Century turns, the flare flicker dies, and the ash rides away on a wind.

We pitched our tent at the edge of the clearing where the pineshadows dreamed all day. Below, the river roared. We went to sleep to the croon of the river, awoke to the roar of the flood. It was cold in the hills and early morning frost sparkled on the grass all summer. Morning and coffee by the campfire with the river roaring coldly. Back there in the pines there were huckleberries and wild strawberries; the river was full of fish. We went into the willows for wild gooseberries and the willow grouse were nearly as tame as pigeons. And the flash of a troutline in the bright air, the tickle of spray by the falls. A bumblebee, pollen-dusty, blunders over. And the river croons at night, and stars, and sleep . . .



VERY WELL, THANK YOU

in which the poet replies to the gracious enquiries of a lady

Sherry Mangan

I

For such kind interest, thanks. After the glamor,
the roseate delirium, I am much as one should be
who has returned to living: carefully frozen.

Were I to answer 'I am dead', that were
preposterous from living lips. Yet am I so, somewhat.
Indeed, I thank you, I am well enough. But I remember.

Love was enough and more. And even in the clearer now
the palest recollection of the drenched rich hours
wakens my body very simply, and the startled brain a little
wavers, clinging to reason as one who undecided should
ask from some doubtful god a sign to solve despair.

Love was enough, and in those sweet drugged days I strode blind, blind as a bat, through every beauty else to find your ordinary arms. Today scarce credible; yet, remembering I know, and in a gust of dead sweetness, shudder, not unlike victorious Saint Anthony; wrench the sick shaken thought away.

Love was enough, long since. The glances from your eyes were to my sluggish sense like winds that whipped about me, deepened my shallow breathing, made the flesh glow, the pulse race staggering (*flamma demanat*), borne on which wind all words were music (*tintinnant aures*).

(It is absurd that I am of a sudden rendered a man too old for his own living, hesitant oddly, staring at the chafed bones of things where they poke through surfaces, unstirred by this or other observation, disoriented, stopped. Why, plainly I was never one to lose an empire for a courtesan's smile; surely I can whip these flagging energies to life again? Why, why do I pick idly at the lint on frayed and useless things, and dully turn again from that to this, and rummage sentimentally in memory's dustbin?)

But then, love was enough. Saying very nothings, your voice was sometimes like far indistinguishable music heard across wide evening waters in extended gardens, and sometimes like the stranger troubling call of valorous clear trumpets in an autumn dawn.

Love was . . . why, I dreamed a face upon the world, like it in nothing. In a mist. Your breasts were surely nothing observed or comparable, but a new world in uacuo, especially created, growing; in those moments of slow detail nothing, a yard beyond my astonished lips, nothing existed. Why,

it seemed that, if you turned to me, your waist was taut with torque of shaftings. When, at long last, after such shuddering closeness as would dissipate even this yard of the extraneous—but of this I cannot speak and scarcely dare remember. When

PAGANY

the recreated world freshly renewed returned to thought
gently, with sense of rolling fields of snow beyond
the casement curtain touched with the intimate glow
of dying fire, to us, silenced and sobered; and when

you slept . . .

how can I say . . . o my lost lady . . . you humanly sleeping
and I, in a house dusky and silent in the middle night,
watching you sleep, hearing the trustful, the human
breath . . . then—love was enough indeed.

(I sink into detested vagueness, doubly vague in that
I dream of dreams. A tenuous exercise! All this
had none existence other than my stubborn wish. Yet
am I as one listless in a slow weakening fever, as one
who, theretofore alive, plucks idly at the counterpane,
energy's fires gone to dull embers. Events diurnal
pass like a ghostly dream-progression, no more real
than these obsessions . . . Forsooth do I bemoan
what person never was, what in my weakness gently I
invented, framing it tenderly from your common clay?
Obsessive ghosts come shouldering in on thought; I turn
memory as shield to memory in pathetic dreaming.)

Love was enough. Why are we architects?

II

There's little mystery. An old tale. After the dream,
the morning. All men discover this, all men who flee
from truth to hope, all men who dream this kinder face
upon a sterner world. There are no brooks to love
an affectation of the brain; consuetude yet mixes
model with statue; renders the dream incarnate.
(Why are we architects?) We watched. Behind the voice,
the words; within the body, will, purpose inimical.

Whenafter, storms. The usual grubby fight
for mastery, a brawl concealed beneath
ennobling principles, impracticable ethics,
daily daily always forever world without end,
till we were sick with thwarted purposes.

PAGANY

Initial compromise rejected (of connubial
expedience the usual half-tolerance contemptuous),
neither would yield, like reeds not breaking;
straining apart against elastic cords of passion.
At memory sick with shame, how amplify? An old tale
and a common. Architects of Babel's tower.

III

From such embattled loving had not peace a gentler
seeming? Parting brought peace. Peace is of many
kinds. The dead have peace. I share
that peace with them.

Am I not quiet now? What to protest, to plain?
After the tumults and resultant fever, I recuperate,
still semi-comatose, but still half-thankfully alive.
The coma not unpleasant: I make my little arrangements,
nourish a taste for anecdotes and bindings, quietly,
let live my neighbor, accept the times and customs, listen
fairly enough to people's vanities—o much like anyone
who's imperceptibly half-ruined, all by halves and civilly.

What should I protest? For long, love was enough;
the face upon the world was world enough.
I had my little manhood in those glamorous days,
brief but intense; you? you will see fairer dawns.
True, of the stormy times occasional remembrance
twitches my body, as an animal killed hours since
twitches reflexively. This is rare, is, of course, to be expected.
Mostly it is peaceful. And none, I hope, do here embrace.

Your kindly query finds me at a dead end, plucking
frayed bits from things, but custome makes it easie:
I protest, I protest, I grow very fond of bindings.
But it was kind of you to think to ask about me.
Indeed, I thank you, I am very well, thank you.



A DREADFUL NIGHT

Josephine Herbst

A light was on in the kitchen and Georgia tiptoed in so as not to wake the family. She took her slippers off and her party dress and hung the dress over the back of a chair so it wouldn't get mussed. It was dark and quiet in the house and the old floor boards creaked as she went to hook the screen doors for the night and standing there, looking out, all the insects in the empty lot next the house singsonged a note higher and then died down again and she was a little scared to be all alone. Not many girls her age would be brave enough to walk home from a party all alone and she was proud of herself and knew that the next day she would tell the girls about coming up the hill and how she thought she saw a man hiding in the weeds and when she walked faster, he walked faster, right behind her, and she was afraid to run. She just walked on and swung her arms and picked a tall white clover to put in her teeth to show she didn't care and when she came to the corner, she looked back, and he wasn't there.

When the doors were hooked she started toward the hall and heard a thud in her mother's room and then someone coming down the stairs. Georgia moved toward the dining room as her mother came in from the hall. She was in her nightgown and sat down on the nearest chair. "Get me a towel from the kitchen," she said. "That vein in my leg broke."

Georgia hurried to the kitchen and snatched at the first towel she saw. She brought it back and her mother looked at it and said, "Not a dish towel. A clean one, out of the pantry." The diningroom was dark and neither of them thought of turning on the light. The kitchen light was strong and Georgia got a clean towel and handed it to her mother. "I'll call Papa," she said and hurried to the hall. A drop of blood had fallen to the dining room linoleum with a thin splash like rain water. "Do you remember, should you tie above or below?"

"Above, not below," said Georgia. She kneeled by her mother and tried to remember the page from her Physiology book. She could see the picture of the heart with the blue and red, and the broken ends of the artery but she wasn't sure if it was above or below you tied. When she had studied that page she said she would always remember on account of her mother who had varicose veins and the doctor said she should wear a rubber stocking or it might burst some day. She wound the towel around

and held it tight and the blood soaked through. Georgia got up and ran to the hall and called, "Papa."

Her voice sounded high and scared her. She came back and looked at her mother. "Are you sure it's below," said Mrs. Strawbridge. "No," said Georgia. "I'll phone for a doctor." Mr. Strawbridge came down the stairs in his nightshirt and bare feet. His hair was mussed on his forehead. "What's wrong?" he said.

"Nothing," said Mrs. Strawbridge. "That vein in my leg broke. Don't get excited." Georgia's younger sister came down the stairs. She stood in her little nightgown looking scared. The blood soaked right through the towel. Mr. Strawbridge hurried up the stairs and put his trousers on. He came back and said, "Has it stopped?"

"No," said Mrs. Strawbridge. "Get me more towels." Charlotte stood on a chair to get the towels down from the pantry shelf. Mr. Strawbridge came in with a basin of water. Georgia was trying to get the nearest doctor on the phone. It was a dial phone and she got a busy number. Then no answer. She said, "I'll run and get Mary."

"Don't get her," said Mrs. Strawbridge. "It'll just frighten her." Charlotte tried to get the doctor again. No answer. "Perhaps the phone's busted," said Georgia. The others paid no attention to her.

"Someone get me something to put around me," said Mrs. Strawbridge. Her voice sounded faint. "And get the camphor."

"Get the camphor," said Mr. Strawbridge and his voice sounded shaky as if he were going to cry. Charlotte got a coat from the hall and wrapped it around her mother. Georgia felt sick at her stomach. "I think the phone's busted. I better run for the doctor," she said. Charlotte brought the camphor to her mother and Mrs. Strawbridge said, "Bring a chair so I can put my leg up." Mr. Strawbridge brought a chair. "I'm going," said Georgia. No one heard her. She rushed out the back door and down the street. It was after twelve and a still moonlight night. The houses were all dark. Her feet made hollow flapping sounds against the cement walk as she ran. "Don't let her die, don't let her die, don't let her die." Her mother has been sewing on her new clothes so she could enter highschool in the fall. Working the machine had done it, if her mother died, she was a murderer and done for. She ran for the doctor to save her mother. Her sister Mary lived on a side street and she ran up under the trees. On the front porch, she called, "Mary." Mary's voice answered, "What is it? is something wrong?"

"Mother. That vein in her leg broke. I'm going for the doctor." She listened and heard Mary speak to Bill. "Turn on the light, can't

you find it?" Mary was up moving around in the dark and Georgia called, "I'm going for the doctor" and she ran down the street toward the hill and at the bottom of the hill five blocks away was the nearest doctor. She clattered up to the doctor's porch and punched the bell and no one came. She kept her finger on the bell and at last she saw a light and behind the stained glass square of the front door a woman came slowly down the stairs, and then she stuck her head out. "The doctor's not in," she said. "Oh," said Georgia, wringing her hands. "Oh," and she stood a minute and the woman said she'd have him come as soon as he came home. Georgia told where they lived and said her mother had broken a vein in her leg.

Then she rushed down the street toward the drug store. She decided to ask the drug clerk what to do. She couldn't go home. The drug store was open and the clerk was talking to a young fellow with a cigar. They both stared at Georgia. She saw she was in her underslip with only a sweater. "Should you tie below or above for a broken vein," said Georgia. "Below," said the clerk. "That's what I thought," said Georgia. "Can I use the phone?" She got the house and her father answered. "It's still bleeding and the doctor hasn't come, I don't know what to do," he said.

"Don't get excited," said Georgia. "The drug store clerk says you tie below, just tie tight, and I'll bring a doctor." She hung up and saw the clerk and young fellow watching her and wondered if they weren't considering her pretty brave. But only for a minute, the next minute she asked, "Do you know the nearest doctor?"

"Doc Small up Rebecca Street."

"That's right," said Georgia. "I'll go there."

"Why don't you phone. Here, use the phone. Wait a minute. I'll get it for you." He twirled the dial and after a wait handed the phone to Georgia. She took it and said to please come right away. "Is it a vein or an artery?" Georgia's hands were shaking and she looked at the clerk and said, "Is it a vein or an artery?"

"You said it was a vein, here a while ago," said the clerk.

"It's a vein," said Georgia in the phone. "I'll be there, don't get excited," said the doctor. Georgia hung up. She called the house again to tell them the doctor was on the way but got no answer. Her teeth chattered and she hung up.

"You better run along home," said the clerk. A woman had come in and stood looking at her. The fellow who had been talking to the

PAGANY

clerk said something in a low tone to the clerk. "Want a sniff of ammonia or something," said the clerk.

"I'm all right," said Georgia. She said "thankyou" to the clerk and the three people in the store stared at her. She started back toward home, running a little. When she came to the street where her sister lived, she turned toward the house. If her sister was still there, she would wait and go on home with her. The house was dark and Georgia called and there was no answer. She knew she would have to go home now. She started and thought, "Save her and I'll give up highschool, I'll give up college." Her legs felt stiff and her hands were all swollen and stiff from hanging down as she ran. She pinched her fingers and wondered if she would have to give up highschool and college if everything turned out all right. She had just said she would, perhaps it would work out like that. But her mother wouldn't let her give them up.

When she came to the corner, she could see the house lighted from top to bottom. She stood in the grass and tried to see the living room window. A lot of people were standing around, like a party. Then she heard a moan, like nothing she had ever heard. Like an animal. The people stood without moving under the light looking down. She couldn't sort the people out in her head but at last she saw a woman down the street who was the wife of a conductor. This woman had never stepped a foot in their house before and how she ever got there Georgia didn't see. There was another dreadful sound and then the people looked up and seemed to be listening to someone who was out of range of the window. They all turned and began going out the side door. Georgia sat down on the back step. She was limp as a rag but nobody was crying and her mother must be saved. Georgia could go on with her education and amount to something and be worthy. She leaned her head on her knees, she was so tired out. Someone came to the back door and said, "For pity's sake. Here she is." It was Mary, Georgia got up and opened the screen door. "Where on earth were you?" said Mary.

"Why I went for the doctor and just got back," said Georgia.

"Yes, that was a senseless thing to do. Why we phoned for Dr Ellsworth and he had begun to take the stitches before that fellow you ran after showed up. And much good he would have done, smoking a cigar. A doctor, smoking."

Georgia followed Mary into the house. Her mother was on the couch, very pale but she smiled. "Where were you, poor child."

"For the doctor," said Georgia. She looked around. Patches of white flour were all over the carpet. "What's this stuff," said Georgia.

"Oh those people," said Mrs Strawbridge. "Their crazy ideas, and I guess we all lost our heads. One said to throw flour on it and it just gummed everything up."

"Little Charlotte didn't lose her head," said Mary, putting her arm around Charlotte who stood there in her nightgown with a kimona on top of it. "She was as brave as could be."

"You go to bed, baby," said Mrs Strawbridge. Charlotte kissed her mother and walked out of the room as if she were sleep-walking. "The little thing," said Mrs Strawbridge, "she called all the neighbors."

"Guess we'd better let mother rest," said Mr Strawbridge. He and Bill had been getting the bed from upstairs down and setting it up in the living room. "You'll get a good sleep and be fit as a fiddle tomorrow," he said. Now that it was over he was ready to boss the show and he capered around and said that in a day or so mamma would be dancing.

Georgia was uneasy about the part she had played. "I ran for the doctor because I thought the phone was busted," she said.

"You," said Mary. "You ran away, you mean. We know you. That's what she always does, mother. Don't you remember that time I was sick and the blanket caught fire. She skipped over the bed and ran out of the house and all around the block. We could have burned to a crisp."

"Now she did the best she could," said Mrs Strawbridge raising her head and looking warningly at Mary.

"Yes, and that other time when Charlotte swallowed the alcohol and we thought it was poison. She ran around the block then."

"She was all right," said Mrs Strawbridge. "You better run along Mary, it's late." Georgia looked daggers at Mary. Mr Strawbridge came over and put his arm around Georgia. "You're a good girl," he said. "You're papa's girl, don't you worry."

It was very late and no use trying to clean up the flour. Georgia felt sick but she got a pail and started in on the dining room linoleum where her mother had been sitting. The rag soaked around on the floor and she rinsed it and the water colored and she got a fresh pail of water. Big dark spots led from the linoleum into the hall and up the stairs. Mrs Strawbridge called, "Don't do that, it will wait until morning." Mr Strawbridge was going to sleep on a sofa near his wife and he had taken off his shoes and waited for Georgia to finish so he could undress and turn off the lights. Georgia called, "I'm just going to do the hall a little, you go on to sleep."

The hall was full of moonlight and the shadows of the grapevine on

PAGANY

the front porch sprawled over the floor. Georgia took the rag and moved it along the hall. Every two feet she scrubbed and then moved on, on her knees. She moved up the stairs and into her mother's room and beside her mother's bed. Then she took the pail down and emptied it and rinsed it and rinsed the rag and stood the pail on the back porch and hung the rag on a nail. She scrubbed her hands good in the kitchen with yellow soap and then she scrubbed them with white soap and put some nice lotion on. She felt sick at her stomach all the time and she went into the washroom and tried to be sick over the bowl. Her face was very white in the mirror. She looked sick. When the lights were out, she tiptoed back through the dining room to the hall. Her mother called, "Goodnight," and she answered and went up the stairs. Charlotte was in bed and pretending to sleep. The bedroom windows looked out on a great field spiked with long shadows of cotton wood trees. It was a close night. The insects had suddenly stopped singing. With every breath you could smell blood. It was like strong rainwater full of rotting leaves. Early that evening Georgia had gone to a party and everyone had laughed. She put her hands over her face but the smell of blood was stronger than the smell of lotion.

The two girls lay flat in bed and had nightmares and woke up again and again sweating. The smell was always there and Georgia longed for morning. She was grateful for the way things had turned out and wondered how long it would be before her mother could use the sewing machine again.



NATIVE TO THE EARTH II

Kenneth White

There is the flight of thunder through the rain
But the ponderous wings have broken as each lifts
And the pores of heaven loose the heavy sweat again
Upon the earth that boils, urges up this very green
Beneath our feet given quivering vernal bubblings, sifts
The wandering steam under our lids where buds seen
Are thick, perpetually forced out and raw
As our eyes are forced and peeled for vision
Of their later sure impaling, after the withdraw,

PAGANY

Heaven's damp retreat from fever, on each other's filaments
Of light incandescenced now with the various sun
Oil feverishly provides the rain-black pavements;
For if we were plants living dryly in the heat
Of cellars, colors would ferociously explode
The farthest ungreen cell in the love-roots whose beat
Would be the dark heaven furious to ignite
The petalled constellations, to fracture
The walled-in air, the imposing corrode
Stone and mortar make upon the pronged electric light
From dust to flowering our eyes may secure
Here in the treed, poled air, and fiercely vibrate
The smallest hair and shoot for release
Into the wet, the falling rain, of the coiled flower-weight
The blood has tortuously wound in the eager hands,
The searching eyes, the ear's brief lease
Upon the soaked words inserted among the bands
And fiery circles that are, above the seething grass, broken
From their rain-spun orbits round the pause
And noisy passages and revolve over lacquerous streets
Melted buildings lie ruined in, force the flower, the word unspoken
Against the clothed flesh, against the stoné, strike cleets
Of fibre into the rain-light, shake off the claws
Buds have fastened and encrusted on the air and feed
The enflowering fire with the ingredients of rain
Wetting hand thrust through crevices of hand, bleed
The love-roots into the public air, where dark heat had lain.

Gramercy Park

April, 1931.



*"la Lune remplissait toute la chambre comme
un poisson lumineux"—Baudelaire.*

MOON AWARENESS

I. Lawrence Salomon

The moon sprang a leak, and silver, molten in the wet thick night,
dripped on the tinny roof. There was a flood of brightness, an aluminum

ecstasy coating the roof all of tin. The silver flood moved slowly, outlining the shadow, first, of a squat cornice-tower, then, of a skylight, and then ever so black the wiry-shaded sequences flecked the awareness there.

This moon awareness soaked through to the rooms underneath the tinny roof. And of a sudden he and she and the child who was of them knew that just that had happened. He knew by the shaft sneaking down from the green shade and across her lumped blanket and on to the wall, and she by the yellow strip speckled on the cheval glass in the corner, and the child by the green bars of the crib grown black in the shadows. But the child was aware of moon-madness as they were not. Is it not a child who must heed them? And a babe must forget the sacredness of womb-dwelling. And a babe must not reveal what they were soon to know, and what the babe would soon not remember, till the time came that it too must go. It knew not of sex and what matter that organs might be as fixed at birth as the buds of flowers. Sex awareness would bring forgetfulness and sex awareness might come so soon after birth.

The infinite distances that kept themselves apart when they, the parents were ever so near, were joined in the sex union, and the distance of him brought to her the awareness of it who was to be. And now the babe was, nor understood the mother-pity nor the father-love,—the strange fixtures and afflictions. And the babe was aware of the mysteriously soothing floodlight on the tin roof over its head and of this the parents could never know.

The lightline edging the green shade made him dream of the days that were sweetly a part of him, when in the first awareness of moonlight he saw, and felt more than he ever could see the girl-woman, her of the broad temples and face not too square—a fine Grecian head he had called it then. Now he knew that buried in the lavender blanket was a soft-distorted lumpy she with a face too slavic for him ever to misname.

Was it she who alone was aware of his coldness? For the babe to be aware of that must forget that other strangeness of which none but babes know. The girl-woman lumped in her softness knew that light of a high moon threw its radiance on the lavender blanket and she thought of moons of adolescent happiness having forgotten the exhilaration of one night in the not too far distance. The mother-eye saw the silver line on the baby face but read not there the awareness only the babe knew of. Once he, the husband, had been as quick to her touch as the silver of moonray on wet green grass. Once he had been and now when would his child be?

Then the child turned on its back and the silver line circled its soft

PAGANY

lamb's hair and the child looked at the lumped lavender blanket and at the scrawny body of him who was its father. And its parents were light in sleep but not so light as to know of the searching and all understanding eyes of the child. And the child mused: "He hungers for the solace of moonray he knew once at his birth and she whom the moonray once circled so gladly bears ill the moon awareness now. She is weary of the moon and its cycle, she is weary with pouring and her body is tormented by the holy blood and her lumpy distorted belly can no longer brook the thought of engendering an aliveness there."

The moon ran colder the next night and the next or so it seemed and of a piercing iciness it was to the mother. And the husband knew that for her, lying there, there would be no more moons and no moon awareness, nor sex aliveness, nor moon communion. But he did not know that so strange a change in the wife must rock the moon from its orbit and bring keen moonray hurts to her, lying there. All he knew was that she was cold and that the lavender blanket must be drawn up over the too developed breasts. And he knew that elsewhere must he seek and nowhere might he find the ecstasy that was once theirs.

The child at the moment felt the redness in the moon though of redness there was none for the mother. And the moon dripped its red poison into the blood of the babe, and the child was aware of sex without understanding.

—I'm hot—thought the man.

—I'm cold—whimpered the woman.

—The babe cried—*whah-whah*.



IF SLEEPING

Etta Blum

If sleeping I have seen a face arise
with eyelids greened by surge of constant water
and mouth a twisted oblong rising toward
the empty eyes that sideways search and peer

if this face I have seen then too beyond
three lonely trees in flame that set a sun

upon the cold corruption of that cheek
the marbled dying and the breathless beat

So do I walk upon the quaverous edge
of curveless shores where hollowly the shells
suck in the trilling vastness of the night
to shrilly sob thru frightened slits of space



THE BROWN BIRD

Myra Marini

Oscar's eyes flashed excitement as he walked stealthily through the deep grass toward the tree. Eva followed close beside him, her hand on his arm. Almost—only a step more. The brown bird with a rapid rocking motion had risen higher as its beak searched in the crannies of the bark. It clung with small gnarled feet and the tips of its tail-feathers supported it as it went steadily peck, peck, peck, quite oblivious to them.

She was full of a desire to feel the soft feathers and the warm beating body of the bird in her hand. The hot hollow-boned body of a bird! Its frantic claws would be around her fingers; it would struggle and then lie quiet with its small heart throbbing. She would open her fingers and let it go.

Oscar held his gray felt hat in his right hand. His eyes were fixed on the bird, never wavering, and his lips were set in a smile beneath the soft wings of his moustache. For a second looking at him she forgot the bird.

With a quick swoop he clapped the hat over the place where the bird had been. But the bird was gone. A faint squawk and a flash of wings, and the bird was gone. It lit on another tree-trunk, but, frightened, fled again still deeper into the woods.

Oscar turned to her, his lips drawn down in an exaggerated grimace of chagrin.

"Never mind. Let's go down to the brook and see if the violets are still there on the bank."

This was her last walk with Oscar. This was good-bye to the pleasant playfellow that had been a welcome mitigator of loneliness. Her first year of teaching in this strange village, for the first time away from home

and the friends she had grown up with, had been pleasanter for his company, and his devoted admiration. A year like this was unreal, an interlude, a vignette. It was off the general course of her life, and as unimportant as a play or a book one read.

It amused her to think how upset her mother would have been. How condescending in his kind way, her scholarly father. "This is my friend, Mr Herman, father. He works in the garage."

Not to deprecate Oscar. When had she known a gentler man, a more modest, a more intelligent? No education, that was all.

"I went to a German school back there in the hills. The teacher was a funny old chap who would settle himself by the stove with his long pipe—the bowl rested on the floor. When anyone started anything he'd flick 'em with a long whip he had. We studied the catechism mostly. When I was fifteen I lit out. My father married again when I was twelve, and my stepmother didn't like me very much."

He looked about her school-room. Respect was in his face, respect for her because she was a teacher!

The first time she had noticed him was one supper-time when she wanted a piece of bread. The landlady was in the kitchen. Her daughter was leaning with one breast pressed against the table-edge, smiling into the eyes of the traveling man. The bread plate was near Oscar. She fixed her eyes on his face until he looked up. With a downward pull of his lips and a mock-enquiring look in his eyes he offered the bread to her. As she took the plate her hand brushed his. She dropped her eyes quickly. After that it became a ritual.

One Sunday he had asked her to go for a ride with him. It was a clear winter day, when the sun lay brightly over the steep brown hill-sides, and the road was hard. For fun he borrowed the ponies from his boss, a handsome matched team which was the pride of the garage-owner. In these days of the automobile it was a novelty to ride behind horses. Not since she was a youngster had she ridden behind the swishing tails and horsey odors. Their hoofs beat a tune of clackety-clack and in the cold air their nostrils were plume.

Sunday afternoons are the jewels of time, for by the pleasantness of Sunday afternoons is the pleasantness of life measured.

She sat close to him under the wooley robe, and listened delightedly while he chattered. And where her arm touched his, where she felt his arm moving with the motion of the reins, her pulses fluttered deliciously to her wrist. It was as if the soft wing of a bird brushed down her nerves.

PAGANY

It grew dark and they were quiet while the stars appeared slowly in the far cold winter sky. High in the west was a new moon, a faint curve of light.

After a long silence Oscar asked in a hesitant voice, "Eva, why is the new moon like that? I could never understand it and I've never wanted to ask anyone."

For a moment she was too surprised to answer him. Then quickly she explained as well as she could, taking her hands from under the robe to show him with her fists how it revolved about the earth.

"Your head is the sun, Oscar, see!"

He dropped his eyes to the road ahead, ashamed.

"You must think I'm dumb!"

She snuggled closer to him and put her hand on his knee. He made no offer to caress her, but he looked at her with a gentle look that struck her heart with compunction.

She chattered the rest of the way. At her door he helped her down and bowed his formal bow.

After that, as spring came on, they walked together every Sunday, even when it rained.

Now it was the end of May and the school year was over. Tomorrow she would spend on the train, and the next day she would be home again. Robert would meet her at the station, and there would be the old routine of her friends again, swimming and bridge, and a dance or two. And the summer concerts with Robert.

She looked sideways at Oscar as they stepped along through the old grass that lay bent over and was pierced everywhere by the lush green of the new. She liked his small arched nose and sensitive full lips under the tiny moustache. His hands were stained by his work, but his clothes were scrupulously neat. There was a gentleness about him, which she had not seen in the boys of her set, boys she had known since childhood. He had rubbed life at more points, he had known work and adventures that would have frightened her younger and more cynical acquaintances. But there remained about him the simplicity of a mind intelligent and uninformed.

They clambered down the narrow path that descended the steep bank to the brookside. The sun sent long streaks of light across the fields, and was yellow on the opposite bank. The water was cool and shadowed, in limpid perpetual motion.

As he turned to help her descend she was sorry it was for the last time. She tripped and leant against him for a moment.

There were violets here, although the season for them was nearly

over. They had no wish to gather them, but sat rather where the bank was grassy, and watched the sun grow redder on the ploughed fields, and listened to the water.

"There will be wild strawberries along here in June. But you won't be here. It's hard to believe."

He said it so simply that she was touched, although she knew how glad she was to be going.

Why couldn't this hour and this leave-taking mean a little more to her? The stage was set beautifully, declining sun, violets, the brilliant glow of new foliage, the handsome man beside her.

And she liked him. Life was incredibly stupid. She wished he would kiss her. He had never offered to. The boys at home had kissed her often enough—but that was nothing—she had been indifferent. To Oscar, although of course she did not love him, she was not indifferent. The fact had puzzled her.

She had tried to thresh it out in her mind. Walking alone one Friday after school, she had penetrated the woods beyond the meadow and the cemetery. It was still winter and the ground was hard with frost, but the sun was warm and clear and as yellow as butter. It lay in lines of palest yellow along the twigs of the silver birches, and glowed deeper on the dark gray-purple branches of shrubs. It was soft and white on bent grasses and sodden leaves, and gleamed brilliantly where patches of snow lingered in crusty triangles on the north sides of trees.

Here she had found a retreat where the ground sloped sharply and protected her from the wind. There was an old fence running along the hollow, and she settled herself against a square, hand-hewn post, and tried to think it out. But her thoughts had been little more than a haze of warm rememberings struggling with a fierce attempt to be loyal to Robert, and to *Love*. She looked with wonder at her pretty legs protruding from her short walking-skirt. She bent them sideways and sitting with one ankle in her hand, turned her face thoughtfully upwards, and let her eyes delight in the patterns of the twigs against a dazzle of winter sky.

She was full of a new self-knowledge.

A tinkling filled the air, and a harsh rapid chatter. A bevy of birds, tiny and gray, had filled the birch tree above her. Every slender twig seemed bent with the thread-weight of a bird, clutching and swinging head-downwards. Their twitter was high and sweet, but occasionally one would chatter in a voice prodigious for his size, and the feathers of his crested head would lift themselves in a scarlet flame. She stretched her hands to

them; she laughed and blew kisses to them, and with rustlings and chatteringings they were gone.

Life was full of a thousand delicious moments. Life went by in a haze, a progress of sensations and emotions. But for her nothing had happened yet to give experience any pointed immediacy.

Well, here was Oscar, and tomorrow she was going. He sat silent, looking at the light as it faded from the opposite bank. They talked in a desultory way and it grew darker. Then he turned and looked at her silently, and his dark eyes glowed deep in the gray light. With a rush of feeling she was sorry for him, as she had never been sorry for anyone before. She moved closer to him and put her arms across his shoulders.

With a low cry he drew her to him. He held her fiercely against his breast, and she felt the strength of his long arms around her. His hot cheek was against hers, and then he kissed her repeatedly.

To his vehemence and ardor she went cold and limp. Not this—she had not wanted this. Not yet, not now, not with him. And yet she knew it was exactly to this that she had been leading him, tantalizing him. He was holding her, his whole body pressed against her, his lips against hers hurting her, and she was smothering. She struggled, and as suddenly, he let her go.

As she sat up and pushed the hair back from her hot face, she looked at him, too ashamed to speak. He sat with his arms over his knees and his face averted.

The spring chorus, the chirruping hyla, beat on her ears like a ghoulis symphony, and the wind stirring the hanging branches of the elms and rippling the quicksilver of the stream, was chilly.

“God, Eva, I’m sorry.”

She did not answer, but her dislike of him, engendered of that helpless moment in his arms vanished, and the grief in his voice was in her side.

“I know you are a nice girl—I should never even think about—about—. I don’t know how it happened, but it’s hard for a fellow. I guess a nice girl like you couldn’t understand that.”

Oscar, it wasn’t your fault—for God’s sake stop calling me that—the words were in her throat, but she did not say them. What was the use trying to tell him? And yet she wanted to. His humiliation seemed false to her—ridiculous.

Why, why, couldn’t she tell him how it had been with her! Nice girl, nice girl! She hated the words; she wished they were something real in her hand that she could tear them and throw them away.

PAGANY

Oscar was looking at her again and before the helpless contrition in his face she wanted to laugh. But it would be cruel to laugh, and it would be cruel to relieve her own aching sense of injustice by any confession. She knew that to his simple philosophy you were either a nice girl, or you weren't. Let him keep his man-made categories, if he wanted to. Tomorrow she would be far away.

She rose to her feet and stooped tenderly over him. She laid her hand on his shoulder, and he put his hand over hers.

"Come, Oscar, take me home. And let's forget about it. I—I forgive you!"



BLOOMED

Bravig Imbs

I

under the trees the air was stained with darkness
and in that leafy region overhead
the night was lost in air and air in night
I could not tell what pressed my head and hands so heavily down
whether it was the falling shadow of leaves
or thin air burdened with descending wings

I felt the weight of summer on the earth
vast plains of wheat with drooping dewy heads
the roses blown beyond their petals' hold
and tumbled tawny pears sprawled in the dusty grass

II

the stars were clouded
or was it weariness clouded my eyes

I turned my head

the heaviness of roses
was pushing my flesh onto the dusty spears of grass

III

slowly the moonlight spread
over the tips of trees and hills
in long curves the soft light dipped
into the valleys
swirled under the leaves

bloomed in the very recesses of my heart

a pear loosened from its bough
and ghosts of nightingales fluttered through the trees



NELLA

August W Derleth

The blackness pressing in upon her exploded suddenly. She opened her eyes, quickly, flashing them open, looking earnestly into the dusk of the room. Her trembling fingers drew the covers up to her breast, where her heart was pounding wildly. She lay still for a moment, hardly daring to breathe, drawing her tongue gently over her dry lips, wetting them.

Then she moved a little, uneasily. She fixed her eyes on the soft glowing whiteness of the moonlight on the spread, flinging her hand outward. The room seemed to grow more light. In the reflected moonlight she saw the clock; it was a little after one.

Then abruptly she heard the sound that had awakened her. The soldiers were marching again. That tramping had been there all the time, but she had not noticed it until now. She drew herself up, leaning back against the old-fashioned bedstead. She listened, her hands clenched tightly about the covers at her breast. She began to breathe a little faster, more unevenly, and her hands began to tremble again. Deep down in her she was shuddering. It was the fear again; it had crept into the room on the sound of the marching feet.

She turned the covers back, suddenly, and swung herself lightly to the floor. For a moment she hesitated; then she moved swiftly, silently, to the window. She came down on her knees, and bent cautiously to look

PAGANY

out. She was afraid they might see her there—and then there was no telling what might happen.

They were passing just under her window. Looking furtively up the road, she could see a long line of them already past, winding out of the town into the hills toward the border. And more were coming. She thought, Oh, if one of them should see me here! They were talking together in low voices. They seemed to like it, marching like this in the moonlight. How would they be if there'd be a war? she wondered.

One of them looked up suddenly, and she drew back into the shadow, trembling. What if he had seen her? Her thoughts began to scatter, hurrying helter-skelter. What if he had seen her? She could not understand her sudden fear. She tried to smile to herself, thinking, How young he was! But fear held her. She was moving cautiously to look out again when she heard a muffled fumbling at the door below; then abruptly the door opened and closed.

She had a sudden wild desire to get up and run. He had seen her! He was coming in! She sat back, shrinking against the wall in the shadow beneath the window ledge. Her unsteady fingers clutched at her nightgown, trying to draw it closer beneath her chin, covering her feet. Someone had come up the stairs—it was he! He was coming along the hall now, slowly, walking on tiptoe. She shrank back, pressing herself against the wall, her hands groping at her throat, her eyes fixed fearfully on the door.

The door opened.

"Go away!" she whispered hoarsely, covering her eyes with her hands.

"Nella! What are you doing there on the floor?"

Nella dropped her hands into her lap. It was Aunt Ada—it was not one of the soldiers—it was only Aunt Ada standing there, looking not like herself, looking like a ghost of herself in the white reflection of the moonlight.

"Oh, Aunt Ada," she said.

"You were watching the soldiers again, Nella Quimby," said the older woman suddenly. "You're a bad girl, Nella."

"Oh, Aunt Ada—really, I couldn't help it. I'm so frightened all alone—just hearing them march makes me feel strange, afraid . . ."

"You're a bad girl, Nella. I've told you you must pay no attention to them. Seems I can't go out of the house for an evening any more, but what I find you all stirred up when I come back."

Nella got up slowly, hearing still in the distance the tramp of march-

PAGANY

ing feet. She stood, rubbing her palms together, her face turned toward her aunt, yet not looking at her.

"I think I'd better go to bed, Aunt Ada," she said.

The older woman stood looking at her for an instant undecided. "All right, Nella," she said at last, her voice softer, the lines of her face less harsh. "But don't get up any more. You might catch cold like that." She backed out of the room abruptly, drawing the door shut behind her. From beyond the door she said, "Good night, Nella."

Nella said, "Good night, Aunt Ada." Then she got into bed, pulling the covers up again. The moonlight had moved upward, so that it fell across her face. She strained to listen for the sound of tramping, but it had gone beyond now. She lay for a moment, looking at the moon, trying to think about those men marching through the night. Presently she fell asleep.

It was after eight when Nella got up and went downstairs. The parrot, which Aunt Ada had brought in from the back porch, cocked its head to one side at sight of Nella's bright blue dress and screamed at her. "Nelll-ah! You're a bad girl, Nella!" Nella flared her handkerchief at the cage, and the parrot fluttered its wings, squawking harshly. She went on past the cage, and the parrot, who had thought she would stop and tease a little, began to mutter angrily to itself, sulking. Nella paid no attention, going on to the kitchen, where her breakfast was waiting. As she sat down, she heard Aunt Ada's voice somewhere. Outside, talking to one of the neighbors, most likely.

"I don't understand that girl, and she twenty already." That was Aunt Ada's voice. Nella sat quite still, listening. "Perhaps there's something the matter with her. She's queer . . . If only her mother hadn't died!"

Nella began to nibble at her breakfast. She ate slowly at the fresh pineapple, sliced in sugar syrup. Of course, there is something wrong with me! she thought. The thought was tempting, and she rolled it complacently about in her mind before going on to another. It was not disturbing, not at all.

"Nelll-ah! You're a bad girl!" screamed the parrot from the other room. Then it began to call shrilly, making fluttering noises with its wings. Nella looked cautiously toward the outer door. Sure enough, there came Aunt Ada, hurrying too. That bird brings her any time, Nella thought.

"Well, Nella," said the older woman, hesitating on the threshold. "You're up." In the sunlight her grey dress looked silver, and her dark

hair looked light. One hand was under her white apron; in the other she held a little tansy.

Nella murmured, "Mmmm," which was meant to mean, "Good morning, Aunt Ada."

"What ails that bird, I wonder? Can't be a moment by myself in the garden but what it sets up a terrible noise." She crossed the kitchen and went into the adjoining room, murmuring threats at the parrot, which subsided at sight of her. Nella watched the older woman vanish into the other room.

She got up from the table abruptly and went to the mirror hanging near the door. She peered at her white face, smiling a little at the seriousness of her black eyes. Her hair was darker than her Aunt Ada's; she passed her hand over it lightly, tracing out the waves.

The older woman came back into the kitchen, saying, "... Always eating, that's what. We pamper that bird too much, Nella." She halted at sight of Nella before the mirror, her eyes narrowing, a troubled frown appearing on her forehead. She coughed. Nella turned around and said, "Yes, Aunt Ada, perhaps we do."

"That Crosby boy called up this morning, Nella."

Nella tensed suddenly. With elaborate slowness, she said, "Oh, what did he want?"

"There's a church social tonight. He wants you to go."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him you'd go."

"Oh, Aunt Ada."

"And don't you dare say a word, Nella Quimby," the older woman said quickly. "Johnny Crosby's as nice a boy as there is in town, and I can't understand why you hold him at arm's length like you do."

Nella went over to the older woman and kissed her impulsively. "Of course, I'll go, Aunt Ada," she said. She went quickly out of the kitchen and back to her room. As she stood with her back against the door, she looked across the room to her mother's framed photograph and said, "You and I know why Aunt Ada never got married, don't we, mother."

Then she crossed over to the bed and sat down. Sitting there, she began to think of Johnny Crosby, attractive Johnny . . . Like the hero of a Western novel, she thought, except that he had what Aunt Ada vaguely designated as culture. She thought of Aunt Ada's saying "He's as nice a boy as there is in town," and she smiled to herself. Abruptly she wanted to go to the open window, stick out her head, and yell, "That's just the trouble, Aunt Ada!" Instead she got up and began to hunt around for

her manicure set. Johnny Crosby was worth fixing up for, but Aunt Ada must not know that.

The afterglow was still hanging red in the sky when Johnny Crosby came for Nella. When they came out of the house, Aunt Ada watching them from behind a curtained window, the streetlights had just gone on. Nella turned once to look back at the window where the older woman was standing; she knew that Aunt Ada was thinking, What a nice couple they make!

As they neared the church, Nella said, "Do we have to go in already?"

Johnny looked a little startled. "No, we don't have to go in yet," he said.

They walked past the church, toward the outskirts of the town. Johnny said suddenly, "We don't have to go there at all, Nella."

She looked at him, asking, "Where could we go instead?"

He hesitated. Then he said, "If you don't mind, we could walk out to the brook. It isn't far, and the moon will be up in a moment; so there'll be plenty of light."

Holding his arm tightly, she murmured, "I would much rather go out there than anywhere else."

He was surprised at the intensity of her voice and said something she did not catch. She did not mind. She remembered her inexplicable fear the first time Johnny Crosby had proposed that they go to the brook. How she had protested then! She had been very silly, though she had minded his saying so.

"You know, it's strange . . ." she began. But of course, she couldn't tell Johnny!

"What?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing, Johnny. You wouldn't understand." That first fear of being alone with Johnny, the fear of the soldiers marching at night—they were so alike. She wanted to tell Johnny, but how could he understand what she herself did not know?

As they went along the little travelled path beyond the town, the moon topped the low ridge of hills in the eastern sky, shedding a white radiance over the valley through which the brook wound its way. Silence fell suddenly between them. Nella began to feel uneasy, as if she shouldn't have come. Johnny looked at her quizzically every little while; Nella thought his eyes were strange.

They came at last to a shadowed hollow near a ramshackle deserted building that had been a mill when the brook had been much larger and swifter. They sat down, Nella a little hesitant.

"Why didn't you come here before, Nella?" Johnny asked.

"Oh, I don't know. I think it was because I was afraid . . ."

"Not of me, I hope."

Nella did not answer. She had begun to feel the fear again, the fear she had always known. She realized suddenly that she had not answered Johnny and said, "Of course not. I don't know what it is. I wouldn't be afraid with you, Johnny."

Johnny moved closer to her, bending abruptly to kiss her. Nella felt oddly limp in his arms. She wanted to protest but she felt that would do no good. She wanted him to kiss her, she wanted his arms around her. She tightened her arms around him impulsively.

He drew away from her almost roughly. "Sometimes I don't understand you, Nella," he said.

She smiled. "Aunt Ada doesn't either, Johnny."

"Oh, it's not the same way."

She moved close to him, her face upturned. She hid the fear in her eyes, thrusting her face suddenly close to his. He hesitated a moment, amazed at the rigidity of her face, seeing her trembling hands. Then he passed his own unsteady hands gently over her temples and took her in his arms, hearing her saying, "Take me, Johnny, take me!"

Nella woke up, her eyes opening on the longslanting patch of moonlight across the bed. Her mind conquered sleep, and she remembered what had happened, remembered her terrible fear, and afterward the release.

She was conscious abruptly of the sound of marching from below. The soldiers had awakened her again. A strange lassitude stole over her. The soldiers marching waking her. A faint irritation grew in her.

There were footsteps suddenly in the hall, the floor boards creaking lightly. The door of Nella's room opened a little, and Aunt Ada's head appeared out of the darkness, her worried eyes turned first toward the window, then toward the bed. She had heard the soldiers, too.

Nella thought, She thinks I'm asleep. She spoke suddenly, "They make it hard to sleep, Aunt Ada . . . always tramping past like that."

The older woman made a startled sound in her throat.

Nella murmured, ". . . Pity they can't march in the daytime . . . 'stead of disturbing our rest like this." Then she turned over.

Aunt Ada stood for a moment in hesitation, then softly closed the door and went back down the hall. Drowsily, Nella thought of Aunt Ada in the garden next morning . . . telling the neighbors . . . I just don't understand that girl!



To B

CE QU'ON PENSE

Gregory Moore

To think that in an instant,
in a casual contact between us,
suddenly
(in a thought)
hoisted to a palsy
of despair for me,
you guessed my horror
of what I wanted,
knowing so sanely
that what I dared not dream
could never be.

You, in that instant,
knew the dream I had not reached;
you read ahead
(as in a mystery)
and when I blundered on the truth
your eyes smiled sadly down on mine
as if to tell me
what was tearing me apart,
and of which
you'd brook no utterance
or token.



GENUFLECTION TO THE ENGINE

R M Thompson

In the North Sea, in the engineroom of a freighter, on the midnight watch. The job is single screw, triple expansion, reciprocating. I am oiling the tops. I am at the valve gear of the intermediate pressure engine. The steel crosshead, with flashy brass oilcups and blue-burnished

PAGANY

bolts, zooms past me. It flies vertically on glistening guides. Below, in the pit, the great web crank gallops its circle. The connecting-rod, polished shinbone of a giant, oscillates in its path between the two. Above, the piston crunches the cylinder walls. The crosshead, the knuckles, is transferring the vertical motion of the piston into the rotary motion of the propellor. There are three such, in tandem, pedalling the screw at the stern of the ship. Three engines in one engine, churning one wake.

It has been running so for fourteen days . . . and fourteen nights . . . constantly. It makes a great noise, frightening to strangers. It will break a man in two, who tries to stop it. It will break an oak beam, a foot square in two. It will break anything in two, now, after fourteen days.

It is making sixty-five strokes a minute. Twice a second it gallops past a given point. I am the given point. The oilcan in my hand is the given point. The oilcan is part of me. I am part of the engine. We three are the engine and its accessories.

Behind me is a valve mechanism, two rods clipping like long scissors. Its short, quick motion preceeds and anticipates the piston motion. It passes its centre a second before the cross head passes. Behind me the scissors clip. Before me the crosshead zooms.

The engine's beat is absolute, inexorable. The great web cranks fly in orbits of oil. They tell a tale. One might hear the engine speak . . . so, as it beats . . . down and up, down and up, . . . "Give me steam, give me steam . . . Kiel Can-al, Kiel Can-al . . . Bal-ti-more, Bal-ti-more . . . chug and chug, chug and chug . . . day and night, day and night . . . swab my rods, swab my rods . . . "

In the ports, against the docks, when the engine is still, is dead, men are all over it, measuring between its cranks, tightening up, smoothing off, cleaning, scraping, dosing, drugging, painting, polishing. It has no steam then to live on. Now it is blown up with magic gas. It needs no mothering now. It is entire, an entity on the ocean, steady beating, beating down the North Sea . . . up and down . . . up and down, its pistons driving to the apex of the sky, to the core of the earth, on an arc of the ocean . . . to the apex of the sky, to the core of the world.

It is a giant, too, six times as tall as a man, as tall as six men, as heavy as a hundred elephants, as strong as fourteen thousand horses. One must know it has being, has a will, is fearless, and fearful. I am an oiler. The engine complete, the unit, has three human being to oil it, four human beings to make steam for it, five human beings to help the human beings who make steam for it. But the engine is the master, is the god out on an arc of the ocean, beating in the shell of a ship.

PAGANY

I am in a perilous place. The crosshead zooms past my face, missing by inches. The eccentric rods clip my trouser's leg. In one hand is my oilcan. My oilcan squirts into the brass oilcups as the cross head flashes by. My arm must learn the rhythm of the engine. My thumb on the oilcan must know the beat of the engine. I step cautiously on the grating.

The ship is rolling easily. With one hand I brace against the engine column. My hand rests on a small pipe leading down to a steam gauge. The pipe is hot. It is very damned hot. I flinch my hand from it. I lose my balance. I fall—not hard, not far, but there is no choice. I fall lightly to the grating on which I stood. My oilcan drops to the floor plates, lands upright. My arm, cut slightly, spills blood. It sizzles on the hot piston-rod, evaporates in smoke.

I tremble, in peril. Gleaming oil-rinsed piston-rods clip past my face. The steel crosshead osculates my shirt front. Eccentric scissors snatch my trouser's leg. The down-stroke does not touch me. The up-stroke does not touch me. I am still. Below is the churning crank. One strike will crack my back, will smear me against the engine column.

Reflexes tremble me. I hear the engine's beat. It controls my thought. Chug and chug . . . chug and chug . . . "carelessness, carelessness . . . reprimand, reprimand." As the piston reaches the top centre I move, as it reaches the bottom centre I move, slowly, carefully, abjectly. I hear the beat, chug and chug, chug and chug . . . "careful now, careful now."

I move machine-like, precisely, exactly. Soon I am clear, beyond danger. The engine beats, "Homeward bound, homeward bound."



NIGHT IMAGES

R. S. Fitzgerald

Late in the cold night wakened and heard wind
And lay with eyes closed and silent, knowing
These words how bodiless they are, this darkness
Empty under my roof and the panes rattling
Roughed by wind: and so lay and imagined
Somewhere far off black seas heavy-shouldered
Plunging on sand and the ebb off-streaming and
Thunder forever . . . Thus lying bethought me, friend,
What traffic ghouls have (or this be legend)

PAGANY

In low inland hollows of the earth, under
Shade of moon, the night moaning, and bitter frost,
And feared the riches of my bones, long given
Into this soil, should tumble to their hands . . .
There was no girl beside me, no one there
Close with arms and breasts, and I, lonely,
Shrinking blear winter's edge, remembering also
Certain dead gardens, lilac scent, and twilight
Veiled descending in summer on that town,
I lay and found my years departed from me,
And feared the cold bed and the wind, absurdly
Alone with silence and the trick of tears.



COQUETTE

Frances Fletcher

In the village they called her the vampire.

She was fortyeight years old, the mother of nine children, and often appeared barefoot in the town. Her hair was black and lustrous. Sometimes she put shiny brass rings into her ears, as if she were a gypsy.

"What can men see in her?" asked the respectable matrons of the town.

"What can she see in other men?" complained Ivy's farmer husband. "Hasn't she got me? And hasn't she got the kids?"

Ivy was not stupid, people said: but they felt keenly the disgrace of her immorality.

Ivy's ascents, or descents, into the realm of the romantic were, to say the least, erratic. In a mood of contrition or despondency she would dismiss her latest lover and return to her life of steady labor on the farm. For entire months she would work like a slave: in the fields with her husband, as only the wives of French Canadians worked; in the garden, in the house. For a long time the keeping of her nine children clean, wellfed and happy would be a kind of ritual for her.

Then she would rebel.

For twenty years it had been the same: work and childbearing, work and childupbringing. Joseph, her husband, thrived under the monotony of his existence. But Ivy was not like Joseph.

And so one morning Ivy again put on her earrings and drove to the creamery with the fifteen cans of milk from the farm. It was only after she was out of her husband's sight that she drew the gold circlets from the pocket of her calico dress and fastened them in her ears. They jingled pleasantly against her cheeks and she smiled as she thought of the dashing young Canuck who worked on the Simmons farm and came to the creamery at about this same hour.

"Fine day, ain't it, my little Joe?" she asked.

"What, ma?" answered the child, not understanding his mother's exhilaration.

Ivy laughed aloud in the morning air as her horse jogged along at a trot. She felt like jumping from her seat and dancing in the fields among the clover and the milkweed blooms.

"Why don't you divorce her?" the sheriff asked Joseph Hebert, during the course of Ivy's newest love affair. "She's a disgrace to everyone—you, your children and the township."

"Don't much believe in divorce," Joseph explained simply. "Ivy is the mother of my children."

"I'll report her to the county authorities," replied the Sheriff, "any time you say the word."

This latest affair was like the rest, except that it lasted longer. Ivy went home as usual but she did no work. When she was in love, she always left her husband alone in the fields: and her oldest daughter had to take charge of the household. Ivy did no cleaning nor dishwashing nor bedmaking. She spent hours before the mirror brushing her long black hair, rubbing her swarthy face with soft cloths and trying various remedies to make her rough hands soft and white.

In these periods the wife was imperturbable before her husband's protests, threats and entreaties.

"O go on," she sometimes responded indifferently, and went out to meet her lover as usual.

"We have decided," the sheriff said one day to Joseph "that we'll have to send your wife away from town unless you agree to punish her. We simply can't have such goings-on."

"Well," the husband acquiesced. "I've been thinking, too, that the court might bring Ivy to her senses. Go ahead and complain."

And so Ivy Hebert, fortyeight and the mother of nine children, was brought before the county court as an incorrigible. The judge was dramatically puritan; quoted the seventh commandment and other Old Testament passages.

In the end Ivy was sentenced to serve for six months at hard labor, in the State House of Correction.

She went unresistingly to do penance. For six months Joseph Hebert was forced to survive existence without his wife.

Often he wept.

"Ivy don't mean no harm," he said. "She's just a little flighty."

Whether or not a halfyear's sojourn in the reformatory brought to Ivy's vague consciousness any deepseated understanding of her offenses against her husband and society, it did create in her a hatred of institutional life which she found even more intolerable than the dull interims on her husband's farm.

With a warmth she had not displayed for years, Ivy kissed her husband when he came at the expiration of her term to receive her back into his affections, from which, of course, she had never been absent. With a new zest Ivy went back to polishing milkcans in the yard and stacking freshly mown hay in the meadows.

She wore her gypsy earrings in the fields: to please her husband, she said. And Joseph, whom the earrings had never pleased, smiled because he was glad to possess his wife again.



THE LOST APOSTLE

C. A. Millspaugh

I

Between the beetle pills and golden palm
that rustles even windless, like Abraham,
I murmur, call, and translate fleckered calm.
Each bush herein more flecked with ashen ham
than any bowl of pebble-stones, or chain,
is flicked by sunlight through a golden glass.
Invoking Mantis perches on the grange
of crickets, on studded snakes in slippered grass.
Among the wad-clad blades of slitted leaves
I meet myself with dust enfastened lung
and see myself in silvered light where cleaves
the toasted tissue-cake of ancient dung.

PAGANY

I leave and go a-walking with the Jews,
from Joshua to Christ beneath the yews.

II

THE PLACE OF AUTUMN LEAVES

Folded in his feathers blue and red,
with violet light and lifted key he comes
with crafty laughter to his time of bread.
Careering, rifting, anchor-lost he hums
his pattest phrase to staff it after least
and lastly apostolic lance. He goes
into the sparsely wood and seeks to crease
a flower on the eaten floor. He toes
into the sap. The shrunk and bitten ants
have shown him to profusion where it weaves
the water-cress with heated frost, where plants
of surly horns are burst with petals, sheaves
are ghosts for pended gods, and viols fold
the silence simply with a noisy cold.

III

THE SONG OF SHELLS

There are such men and men, they tell me, men
that single out the eye and simpering dish
old cartilage and fat beneath the bend
and frond of velvet; men who pin a fish
to stall and stable, on enamel; dig
the quirk of grasshoppers to heat of lust.
All these must once have plucked a yellow fig
with Moses and waved themselves before the bust
of freshly girl. Same Sebastian darts
again will thirst for thigh and throat and side;
they, their dark into the twisted parts
of long men, short, and many other tied.
Old Mary did not know the air would bleed
so much as this before she let her seed.

PAGANY

IV

THE HYMN OF MIRRORS

Shift, day, and sift and fall on anything
distraught and distant, silent; call and comb
the grass, the hair of stars—they blondly sing
the chant of elder darkness with the tone
of golden gongs. Before the dawn will screech
and study out the tracings on my face,
I will flick my bleeding fingers, reach
the air, and fling a living cross upon this place.
All leaves need know it under clocking suns;
the mourners stride away with clanking feet.
Night, night, and night, like creeping nuns,
will part and pray, will rise and laugh and beat
their laughter on the hills; flesh loosed at last
from help of harlots and skin upon a mast.

V

JOURNEY SONG

Who sits with crooked feet upon the ash
of wasted fire? Who clinks a pewter cup
against the clay? He who can eat the hash
of wine and molded bread. He has been up
since dawn—far past the harlot's portico.
Alone, he wist not whence his fellows came;
but there were bones this side of Jericho,
and Jordan-fish still fed upon the game.
O magnify thee, far-from-covenant!
O wonder in the whipping of the wind!
Shall I then drown before the tiring moment
tells the ghostly priests to bring you in?
O I shall die before I touch the stones,
twelve-piled, in midst of all these shifting bones.



HERALD-TRIBUNE-ACME

R B N Warriston

One was standing at the bar of the Simplon Club when Ancil came in. He walked directly over. Ancil never looked around.

"Why didn't you answer the door?" one asked.

"I was taking a shower. And, I knew you'd come over here. Rye," he said.

"Health."

"Another one, sir?" asked the bartender, reaching for a clean pony.

"Shall we have dinner here this evening?" said Ancil.

"No, my wife's in town."

"Charming girl," said he. "All right, we'll go over to my apartment. Rye again."

"Again," said one.

"Well, what contracts in space have we effected today?"

"Thank you. I think Lewis and Conger are going to take twelve quarter pages. And what distractions were you fortunate enough to suffer?"

"Thank you," said Ancil. "None of importance. But you think Lewis and Conger may actually jump into it, eh? What a salesman you must be."

"It's a good magazine."

"Possibly. But evidently not good enough to recommend itself. I prefer to think it is your art that has persuaded them."

"Thank you," one said. "But you imply I falsified the magazine through the medium of my presentation."

"Presentation. That's it. You should be a writer," said Ancil. "Your choice of the word presentation shows exactly how you falsified it."

"Presentation is a stock word describing some of a salesman's activities in the advertising world," one said.

"That modesty and seeming passion for exactitude must be one of your assets. My point exactly, you see. Lewis and Conger like you. You present a magazine. Probably they will like the magazine. Then, being human, they will look for reasons which vindicate their action."

"The only vindication would be sales of merchandise."

"Easy. I'll go down and buy—an orange squeezer, and say I saw it in your magazine."

PAGANY

"If Lewis and Conger knew that they wouldn't feel vindicated."

"I wonder if they'd refuse to sell me the orange squeezer."

On the way out Chick Endor spoke to him.

"Who was the face with Chick Endor?" he asked.

"Hans Anderson's girl."

"I knew I didn't know her."

"Friend of my wife's."

"Charming girl. Good taste," said Ancil.

"Thank you," one said. "Getting tough though. Anderson and night clubs."

"Tough all round. Taxi!" called Ancil.

"She still garnishes her conversation with a soupçon of Huxley."

"Tough. Aldous, eh? His mind's virginity has been violated so often he's in danger of falling to the level of an educated man."

"You don't approve him?"

"I am bored by his reiteration. It classifies him."

"I think he'd be sensitive to that."

"Thank you," said Ancil.

In his apartment he said, "Have another drink?"

"Not before dinner."

He phoned some orders to the dining room.

"I never quite believe that you can do it, you know. Bluff around at an office, I mean, as if you were important; and then not get fearfully drunk every evening when the reaction comes."

"You make it sound so dramatic."

"Gad, I apologize. But you confirm my suspicions. You dodge the issue. It is dramatic for you."

"Well, not to give you a short answer, and to spare you a platitude, I would say yes."

"Have you spared me a platitude?"

"An enormous one."

"Which one?"

"The one about everything, for the person without an income, being dramatic."

"It sounds like a crack at me. But I never had any gift for the dramatic," said Ancil.

"And I am laboring to reduce the element of drama I was born with."

"Some day we'll both be stupid, eh?"

"What a vulgar conversation," one said. "All about money. I must have introduced it."

"I met a man this afternoon," said Ancil, over dinner, "who presented a most curious anomaly. See what you can make of it. His lack of virtues was not a quiet one—obscurity missed him because of a disharmony in his faults—but he was smoking a beautiful straight grain pipe."

"This is clearly a case for your talents," one said.

"I accept. The background is easy. He was an advertising man because his self-confidence was of that type that has never known a qualm. He couldn't be in securities. He was a salesman because no other profession could wear such a stiffly starched shirt. He was an employer, rather than an employee, because his clothes were made by Bastuble and all the pockets were sewed up."

"That also gives his figure and his age."

"All this was obvious. But now what do you make of this? He had oil on his hair. He had just had a shoe shine. His vocabulary included 'tycoon', 'potent', and 'quota'. And he was defining very patronisingly some abstruse thing called the 'class market'. So far there's nothing to the good, eh?"

"Nothing to justify a straight grain."

"We agree surprisingly for acquaintances of such long standing."

"Maybe it wasn't a straight grain."

"You do me an injustice," said Ancil. "But to proceed—can you think of any way the chap could have picked out a straight grain?"

"Let me review it. You say he was about fifty-five, with white hair?"

"Well, yes and no," said Ancil.

"And you say he had a tenor voice which lisped slightly?"

"You amaze me."

"And you think he is the type that turns down raises for his employees with an unctuous talk about dividends in hard times."

"Better and better."

"And, finally, he must have smart men under him—?"

"Amazing! But I never suspected—."

"I confess. I know him. He's my boss."

"Indeed! I should have thought of that. But, as I was saying, he was a charming fellow."

"He had a charming pipe. A charming pipe," said one. "I gave it to him."



WHITE MULE
William Carlos Williams

VI

How much does a little thing like that really know, said Joe half to himself one evening. It doesn't look as if it ever would know anything, said his wife sitting nearby. It's a smart kid, Joe went on. All it does is cry, broke in the grandmother, the poor thing.

Vinie took it out every day and walked by the hour with it always in the park—with her slow gangling gait, looking around over her shoulder whenever she'd hear some outcry of the playing children there, or sitting lazily watching the smart carriages go by on the drive. But she liked the baby and considered her job minding it a pleasant and amusing pastime.

Tha's the worstest lookin' baby I ever *did* see, she would say to herself putting it in the carriage or taking it out as it wobbled and slid about in her able hands, the po'est baby I *ever* had to do with,— as if she had ever had to do with any white baby before—which she certainly hadn't. But she was a natural mother for all her lack of years. And she'd give black looks to any one who happened to look into the carriage, some old lady who would perhaps exclaim at the baby's appearance.

It was from the beginning the baby's very scrawniness which seemed to fascinate her. It wasn't that she was sorry for it. She was charmed by its curiousness, its unlikeness to anything familiar to her in her brief experience of living. It tickled her to see it naked, she'd grin all over and shake her head from side to side: Well, if you ain't the worst! But Gurlie kept pretty close watch on the little nigger—for a time, so Vinie could only stand by and watch while the baby's toilette was being made, her hands on her hips, her head on one side, her face intent on watching every movement of her white mistress. Can I—Won't you let me dress her this mornin', Mrs Stecher?

No, said Gurlie.

But one day the third week, a hot day, Gurlie had to take her mother over to Brooklyn, so after several words in Norwegian between the two women Gurlie came to Vinie and said they were going to leave the baby alone with her—that it was asleep and maybe it would sleep till she came

PAGANY

back. But if it did wake—and so forth and so forth. To which Vinie nodded solemnly, Yas'm. Yas'm.

It was awfully hot in the apartment. Vinie watched from the front window as the ladies emerged from the door downstairs, looked up and then, seeing her, walked slowly down the street and finally disappeared. There she continued to lean listlessly in the baking sun for half an hour, kneeling on the floor and looking up and down, leaning way out to try and look into the apartment next door—which she couldn't quite do. So she pulled her head in and after getting a drink of water at the tap in the kitchen, soaking her face and head there, letting the water run up and down her arms, she shook her hands more or less dry and went in to see if the baby was still asleep. And there she sat down and looked at it till it opened its eyes to hers. That made her goggle and look around instinctively to see if she were being watched. Then she picked the baby up, took it over to the big bed and saying to herself, out loud, that it was an awful hot day she started to take off the baby's clothes. What you doin'? she said to herself. What you doin' takin' off that baby's clothes? Didn't I tell you never to do that? Didn't I tell you? But she kept on steadily, carefully undressing the baby for all that. It grinned its crooked little grin at her as she lifted and turned it—which encouraged her to work rapidly. Her heart was beating with excitement.

Carefully she spread a soft cotton blanket on the big bed and upon it lay the completely naked baby—carefully, skilfully. There, she said at last, tha's the way. There you is. There you sho'ly is. You ain't got nothin' on you. You ain't got nothin' on you at all. Nothin'. Tha's what you like. Tha's yo' summer dress, tha's yo' summer dress. Vinie gived you that. How you like it?

For a fact the baby liked it immensely in that hot room, if actions mean anything, for it lay completely relaxed on its back, its head moving slowly about as if it were viewing the room though its eyes didn't seem to focus on anything—or if so just for a moment and then wandered on.

What you seein'? asked Vinie watching it intently. Can you see Vinie? Hea! here, she moved her own face so as to get it into the baby's line of vision, but without result. Tha's a funny baby, she said now. You is a real funny baby, she changed her manner, talking direct to the little mite. You ain't even a cat. How big is you?

With that she put her elbow down on the bed by the baby's feet and then lay her forearm down beside the baby, her finger tips coming just to the mite's rounded crown. Half an arm, she said, tha's how big you is, half an arm.

The baby was playing up to the girl's gentle voice and easy manner to perfection. With half closed eyes, it moved first a finger, then an arm as if talking some mysterious sign language. Vinie couldn't contain her curiosity. She got right onto the bed beside the baby and started carefully to look it over. For no reason at all her look began at the belly button. Now will you tell me what in the world is that to do for? she wondered to herself. She took her finger and gently pushed at the small rosette of skin where the umbilical cord had grown, then put her hand up to her own belly feeling there also. She looked deeper into the little umbilical pit, spreading the skin apart and saw there a little accumulation of cotton dust which with great care she picked out upon her sharp finger nails. The baby did not move but seemed to enjoy the play.

But all at once the infant voided freely—the little amber puddle rolling over the blanket as if it had been quicksilver—without sinking in. Vinie jumped and in a flash was back with a diaper. It had not got on the coverlet—luckily. Man alive! she breathed, is I lucky!

The whiteness of the baby's body caused her to look and look again. She pinched the flesh of the belly gently up between her fingers, shaking her head again and again. So flabby was the skin that it remained that way, pinched up, for several moments after she had withdrawn her hand. You sho' is po', was her only comment.

Its little ribs seemed to slide back and forth under the skin as the infant breathed, irregularly. Now it would take half a dozen rapid, fluttering inhalations. Then it would stop, it seemed, no sign of life there, then the fluttering. It's hands were open but the minute Vinie went to look at them they closed vigorously shut so that she hardly dared to spread the fingers out. But she did, finally, and there, in the little sweaty palms, were the same dust flakes she had found elsewhere. The feet squirmed and drew back suddenly from her hands, sharply with a snap. But somehow the baby did not cry. Vinie was slow and gentle.

You ain't got no legs at all, said the girl sympathetically. No more than a frog. But the little feet wiggled and twisted away each time she put her hand upon them. And your arms is worse. But when the baby got a grip on the colored girl's strong index fingers with each of its tiny fists Vinie could almost lift it from the bed.

The diminutive pimples of the breasts next caught her eye, she gently rubbed them with her finger tips as the baby squirmed and stretched. Tickles, huh? she said. Tha's right. All under the opaque white skin she could make out the blue veins, Blue blood, like you Mammy say.

Rather uncertainly she looked now at the miniature middle parts but

got to laughing, sniggering before she had gone very far and with a deprecatory—You's a girl all right. You ain't no boy. A white girl, they ain't no difference—don't seem to be—she turned to the baby's ears and nose and face with evident relief.

By chance her finger fell into the fontanelle whose lack of bone made her pull back her hand suddenly. That was one too many for her.

The time was getting on. Hurriedly she began dressing the baby which, when finally she had clothed it as it had been before, she put back in its crib, then giving it its bottle as she knew how to do, she left it and lay down on her own bed where Gurlie found her fast asleep—the baby crying—when she returned at six, all excitement and bustle, to begin to get supper ready.

The grandma went in to the baby and picked it up instantly, found it soaked and spoke sharply to the mother in Norwegian while Vinie stood with wide eyes feeling doom descending upon her. But it didn't.

Agh, nonsense, replied Gurlie in English to the older woman, leave it alone. Take the baby out of here, I've got to get supper. She was satisfied with Vinie who only cost her three dollars a week and couldn't bother to get another girl. The Grandmother took the baby and went away still talking.

Sure, if you pick the baby up every time it opens its trap, said Joe later in the evening, it will get to like it. Wouldn't you? To this the grandmother objected that it would rupture itself if it were left to cry. How many babies have you known that ruptured themselves crying? asked Joe. None, because we pick them up when common sense tells us to in my country. Then what are you talking about? was his reply. Anyhow the baby, who began crying again at that time, was picked up and he went out of the room.

How long is the old lady going to live with us? he asked his wife later in the evening. But she didn't take it amiss as he thought she might—for he was half joking. She herself had not been so well satisfied with the new menage since it had been growing on her in the past few weeks. Seizing the situation as it stood she told her husband she would like nothing better than her mother out of it—any time they could find a place for her—the sooner the better.

Turn out the light—hard, he replied. I've smelt gas around this place ever since we moved into it. Did that damned little nigger come in yet?

Oh go to sleep, said his wife. Good night, she added leaning over

him. Go on away, he answered her, it's too hot tonight for that sort of thing. But he kissed her just the same.

Mornings Gurlie bathed the baby with her own hands—like that! A blanket on the table, as the mother laid the infant down, brusquely, feeling the hard under-surface it tilted back its head, stiffened and, over-balanced by the weight of its own occiput, rolled half to one side, felt itself falling and in a sudden fright threw out all its limbs, rigid, and instinctively caught its breath then let out a convulsive yell. Then in the effort rolled wildly to the other side, careened and kicked out stiff again, yelling shaking and growing red with the effort.

It's all right, said Gurlie in her usual collected manner, drawing the water.

All right? said her mother hurrying to pick it up. It's terrified. That's no way to treat a baby.

Oh, said Gurlie, I'm watching it.

Yes, you're watching it. It could kick itself onto the floor. I pray God may take it—you'll never raise it this way. You let it lie there. You let that ignorant child mind it. You are not a mother to it. You should hold it in your arms.

I do, said Gurlie.

When? replied her mother. A baby needs to be held. Look at the back of its head, all the hair is worn off. That's how much you mother it.

Vinie had noticed that too.

Look at it, flying in all directions. It doesn't know what to do. Babies should be swaddled to hold their legs straight, to make them feel firm. But I am old fashioned, I know nothing. Nothing but a diaper—that is too big for it—a big wad of cloth pushing its poor little legs out like a frog. You don't even know how to put on a diaper. But you won't listen to me. Its legs need to be comfortable and firmly held. And it should not be left to cry.

Well, pick it up then when it cries. It knows how to get what it wants. Ever since you came here it cries and you pick it up. Now you've taught it that.

Sure, Joe would say at such a time, I told you. It's a smart kid.

And Vinie, witness sometimes to all this, Vinie too would say, Lady, you sho' knows what you want—amazed amused, when the baby would be convulsed with crying, her sensitive mouth opening in imitation of the baby's who would be mad through.

But most mornings, the weather being fine, when the baby would begin its whining yell, Gurlie would call to Vinie to drop whatever she

was doing and take it out—into the park. And she had never to speak twice.

We got that fixed, said Vinie to the baby, taking it downstairs. When you wants to take yo' ride, you yells. And I's here to take you. And *does you know* it?

Once in the park the morning ramble would begin once more. The baby drowsy or else its eyes wide open, staring, or so it seemed, at the joggling fringe at the edge of the hood which the mother would tell Vinie to pull down to keep the sun out of the baby's eyes.

How you gonna see that a way? Vinie would say to the baby, later on. And back she would push the hood, tho' if the baby squinted and blinked too much she was careful to turn round and walk away from the sun until she could find a shady bench to sit on and watch the squirrels or the others like herself with children there.

If the baby yelped she'd look at it, change it or joggle it awhile, then if it went on yelling she'd sit and look at it intently, watching how its little mouth would go into a square, showing the gums and the curled back tongue, stiffened, unmoving as the surprising sound issued from that hollow throat. Vinie would try to look far down to see if she could see where all that noise came from. The whole posture, lips and tongue, might have been a flower so unaffectedly did the little colored girl look at it sometimes. Its eyes would pucker closed. If it got its cap cockeyed over one eye, even down over its nose, she'd push it back and say, You sho' can cry. You sh' can cry when you gets set to it. Then she'd be attracted by some other happening and appear to forget the baby. Till it would stop. Then she'd straighten it, get up maybe and walk a little further.

These summer days were doing the infant a world of good. But what would the fall and winter bring later? It was hard to say.

But as the thing seemed to know when to cry so that the grandmother would rescue it, so in the end it learned not to cry when in the park with Vinie. Mostly as July wore on it would rest quietly in the carriage when outdoors, or miraculously cease crying as soon as Vinie spoke to it.

It lay in the sun moving its hands, tentatively fumbling with them in spasmodic jerks along the cotton quilt, then wildly gripping—the air—or whatever came against them—locking its fingers into the loose fabric and holding on like grim death.

Leggo, Vinie would say. Leggo a that. Take yo' fingers away.

Then the baby would swing the other hand up and grab blindly with that also. Her face would be all excitement at such times, her whole

PAGANY

body would draw itself up and she'd try and cram the object, no matter what it was, toward her mouth.

I'll fix you one of these days, you wait and see, said Vinie, if you suck that blanket that way. Look at yo' mouth, all red slobber. Leggo! I'll put some pepper on yo' fingers. You see if I don't.

(*To be continued*)



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Etta Blum is now teaching at Sunnyside, L. I.

Jean Cocteau needs no introduction to America.

August W Derleth is a native of Sauk City, Wisconsin. His work has been printed in *The American Mercury* and other native magazines.

R S Fitzgerald is at present at Oxford, England.

Frances Fletcher, of Chatham, Virginia, has contributed to *This Quarter*, *The American Caravan* and other publications. By birth and lineage she is a New Englander.

John Gould Fletcher is well known both here and abroad as a poet, art critic and biographer. Despite his long residence in Sydenham, England, he is essentially American. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, January 3, 1886, he was educated at Phillips Academy, Andover, and Harvard College.

Josephine Herbst (Mrs John Herrmann) is busily engaged in completing a new novel, radically different from such earlier work as "Nothing is Sacred." She is living in Erwinna, Pennsylvania.

C A Millspaugh writes from Muncie, Indiana.

Katherine Anne Porter, author of the volume of short stories "Flowering Judas" is at present living in Germany.

Edwin Rolfe has been published in *Front* and other advance guard magazines.

PAGANY

O E Rudge, a translator of note, is an intimate of Ezra Pound.

Syd Salt has been printed in *transition*, *Poetry*, *Front*, etc. He has just completed a novel "The Stranger" and is in Provincetown working on another.

I Lawrence Salomon was born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1899. He received the degrees of B A and M S from the College of the City of New York. At present he is teaching and living in the Bronx.

Julian L Shapiro, printed by *The New Review*, has put aside his legal practice to write a novel of New York City where he is resident.

Tess Slesinger, of Brooklyn, has been printed by *This Quarter*, *The Menorah Journal* and other periodicals.

R M Thompson was born in Boston in 1901. From grammar school he went into the Navy (during the War), from the Navy into the Merchant Marine. He has worked in ships since as seaman, fireman, oiler, engineer, etc.

Jean Toomer, author of "Cane," has recently married Margery Latimer of Portage, Wisconsin. They are now on the border of Mexico, both at work on new writings.

PAGANY

The DRAGON Series

Edited by ANGEL FLORES

Limited Editions

By YVOR WINTERS: *The Journey and Other Poems* \$1.00

By WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS:

The Knife of the Times and Other Stories \$1.50

By KATHLEEN TANKERSLEY YOUNG:

The Dark Land \$1.00

By V. J. MCGILL: *A Philosopher Meets a Novelist* \$1.50

By ROMAIN ROLLAND: *The Revolt of the Machines* \$1.50

Woodcuts by Frans Masereel

Translated by William A. Drake

and many other distinguished titles. For the latest lists and subscription price application should be made to the publishers:

The Dragon Press

240 Linden Avenue

Ithaca . New York

PAGANY

The Editor of *Pagany: A Native Quarterly* announces
for future publication:

FIVE ALONE

by

August W Derleth

A PERFECT AFFAIR

by

Eugene Joffe

LITTLE NIGGER BOOK

by

Moe Bragin

THE BIRD

by

Meridel Le Sueur

THE ORCHARD

by

Albert Truman Boyd

BUN GRADY

by

Jack Conroy

TWENTY-FIVE BUCKS

by

James T Farrell

THE FIRST AUTUMN

by

Erskine Caldwell

POST MORTEM

by

Eugene Armfield

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
THE MIRACLE— <i>Meridel Le Sueur</i>	1
SUNDAY EVENING REVERY— <i>Edwin Rolfe</i>	16
CHRIST IN SAWYER STREET— <i>William Chapman</i>	18
ONE OF THE OTHER— <i>Kenneth White</i>	31
THE SUMMER WITCHES— <i>Benjamin Appel</i>	32
"DIS, CONNAIS-TU L'IRREMESSIBLE?"— <i>Jay du Von</i>	37
TWO STORIES— <i>Julian L. Shapiro</i>	47
POEM— <i>Harry Roskolenkier</i>	55
NEW UNION— <i>J. Railford Watkins</i>	56
BY WAY OF PROLOGUE— <i>Sherry Mangan</i>	61
REFRESHMENT— <i>Francis Butterworth</i>	62
AFTER-IMAGE— <i>Erskine Caldwell</i>	73
ELECTRA-ORESTES— <i>H. D.</i>	81
FROM THUNDER TO THUNDER— <i>David Cornel DeJong</i>	84
THREE POEMS— <i>Edward Dahlberg</i>	88
NO GROUNDHOG'S LIFE— <i>Moe Bagin</i>	93
WINTER IN MY HEART— <i>Albert Halper</i>	106

PAGANY

FIVE POEMS— <i>Norman Macleod</i>	107
GREEN SUMMER— <i>Roderick Lull</i>	110
MORNING SUN— <i>Karlton Kelm</i>	117
THE SHRINE AT SAN JOSE— <i>Raymond Otis</i>	121
GEORGE AND CHARLIE— <i>William March</i>	125
SYMBOL— <i>Louis Adamic</i>	135
WHITE MULE— <i>William Carlos Williams</i>	143